

# Sūrah Al-Kahf

(The Cave)

Sūrah al-Kahf is Makki. It has 110 verses and 12 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

## Verses 1 - 8

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا ﴿١﴾  
 قِيمًا لِيُنْذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِمَّنْ لَدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ  
 الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ﴿٢﴾ مَا كَثُرِينَ فِيهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣﴾ وَيُنْذِرَ الَّذِينَ  
 قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا ﴿٤﴾ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا لِآبَائِهِمْ كَبُرَتْ  
 كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾ فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ  
 نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا ﴿٦﴾ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا  
 مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴿٧﴾ وَإِنَّا  
 لَجَاعِلُونَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيدًا جُرُزًا ﴿٨﴾

Praise belongs to Allah who has sent down to His servant the Book and allowed no crookedness in it, [1] a straightforward Book to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give glad tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a good reward (Paradise) [2] where they will dwell for ever, [3] and to warn those who have said that Allah has taken to Himself a son, [4] while they have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers. Grave is the word that comes out of their mouths. They say nothing but a lie. [5]

So, perhaps you are going to kill yourself after them out of grief if they do not believe in this message. [6]

Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it so that We test them as to who among them is better in deed. [7] And surely, We are going to turn what is thereon into a barren land. [8]

### The properties and merits of Sūrah al-Kahf

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضي الله عنه appearing in Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, one who has memorized the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain protected from the ill effects of Dajjāl (imposter). In another report in the same books and from the same authority, the same thing has been said about having memorized the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf.

And it has been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites the first and the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf, for him there is light from his feet up to his head. And the one who were to recite the whole Sūrah, then, for him there is light from the earth up to the sky."

And it appears in some narratives that a person who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will have light from his feet up to the sky. This light will serve him well on the day of Qiyāmah, and every sin committed by him between the past and the present Jumu'ah will be forgiven." (Imām Ibn Kathīr has declared this report to be *mawqūf* (a Ḥadīth the narration of which stops at a Ṣaḥābī and does not ascend to the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

And Ḥāfiẓ Zya' al-Maqdisī, in his book Al-Mukhtārah, has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will remain protected from every *fitnah*. And if Dajjāl appears, he will stay safe against the trying challenges released by him as well." (All these narrative reports have been taken from Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

According to a report from Dailamī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه appearing in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The entire Sūrah al-Kahf was revealed at one time and seventy thousand angels came with it" - which shows its majesty.

### The cause of revelation

Imām ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn

‘Abbās ﷺ that the Quraysh of Makkah (disturbed by the rising influence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a prophet) sent two of their men, Naḍr ibn Ḥārith and ‘Uqbah ibn Abī Mu‘ayt, to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Their mission was to find out what they said about him as they were learned in past scriptures of the Torah and Injīl. The Jewish scholars told them, "put three questions before him. If he answers these correctly,\* you should know that he is a prophet and messenger of Allah, and if he fails to do that, you should know that he is a pretender and not a messenger. Firstly, ask him about the young men who had left their city in the distant past and what had happened to them, for this is a unique event. Secondly, ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. Thirdly, ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit) as to what it was?"

The two Quraysh emissaries returned to Makkah al-Mukarramah, informed their tribesmen that they had come back with a decisive plan of action and told them all about their encounter with the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Then, these people took these questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He heard the questions and said that he will answer them tomorrow. But, he forgot to say '*insha'Allah*' at that time. These people went back and the Holy Prophet ﷺ kept waiting for the Divine revelation in the hope that he will be told about answers to these questions through *wahy*. But, no *wahy* came until the next day as promised. In fact, fifteen days went by and things stood as they were, neither did Sayyidnā Jibra'īl come nor did the revelation. The Quraysh of Makkah started throwing taunts which caused real pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

After fifteen days, came angel Jibra'īl with Sūrah al-Kahf (wherein the delay caused has also been explained by saying that one should say '*insha'Allah*' when promising to do something in the future. Since, this was not done in the event concerned, therefore, revelation was delayed as a measure of reminder. In this Sūrah, verses relating to this matter such as: (18:23,24) وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ (later). Also related in this Sūrah there was the event about the young

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\* That is, he gives the answer he should give (and his correct answer to the question about 'Rūḥ' will be that Allah Ta'ālā knows its reality best). So, this report which appears in Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, p. 191, v. 15 is not contrary to the report which has appeared on pages 544-47 of this volume under the commentary on verse 85 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl - Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī.

men known as Aṣḥāb al-Kahf or the People of the Cave, and the event concerning the travel of Dhul-Qarnain from the East to the West. Also included therein was the answer to the question asked about 'Rūḥ' (Qurṭubī and Maḥzarī with reference to Ibn Jarīr). But, answering the question about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) briefly was as dictated by wisdom. This was taken up separately at the end of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (17:85) and this is the reason why Sūrah al-Kahf has been placed after Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl [al-Isrā'] - as mentioned by Al-Suyūṭī.

### Commentary

The word: *عَوَجَ قَيْمًا* (*iwaqj*) in: *وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَوَجًا قَيْمًا* (and allowed no crookedness in it - 1) means crookedness of any kind, or inclination towards one side or deviation from the norms of rectitude. The Holy Qur'ān remains pure and free of all that in terms of the perfection of its words and meanings. It simply admits of no distortion anywhere, either in eloquence or in knowledge and wisdom. The sense which has been conveyed in a negative or eliminative form through: *عَوَجًا* *وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ* (and allowed no crookedness in it) has been fortified positively through the word: *قَيْمًا* (*qayyimā*) which follows immediately for emphasis. The reason is that this word carries the sense of: *مُسْتَقِيمًا* (*mustaqīmā*) and that which is: *مُسْتَقِيم* (*mustaqīm*: straightforward, straight, upright) will not have the least crookedness or tilt towards any side. However, *قَيْم* (*qayyim*) can also have another sense, that of caretaker, custodian and protector. Given this probability, the sense of the expression would be that the Qur'ān, while perfect in itself as free from all kinds of excess, deficiency and crookedness, keeps others upright, firm and unflinching and protects the interests and advantages of all servants of Allah. Thus the gist of the two expressions would be that the Holy Qur'ān stands perfect in itself and has the ability to make men and women created by Allah become equally perfect. (Maḥzarī)

It was said in verse 7: *إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا* (Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it) with reference to all living forms, vegetation, mountains, minerals and everything else present on the earth. They are its embellishment. That there are snakes, scorpions, beasts and many harmful and fatal things may lead someone to doubt as to how can they be called 'an adornment for it.' This doubt is unfounded because everything in this world considered harmful, fatal or plain bad

may be so in a restricted sense but, in terms of the totality of creation, nothing is bad. Everything, no matter how bad, has been invested with many benefits by Allah Ta'ālā on other counts. The medical use of poisonous and fatal life forms in the interest of human beings is an example. Therefore, things that are considered even bad are not that bad in terms of the function of this entire universe.

### Verses 9 - 12

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ  
 أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا  
 مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾ فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا  
 ﴿١١﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ أَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْصَى لِمَا لَبِثُوا أَمَدًا ﴿١٢﴾

**Do you think that the People of Kahf (the Cave) and Raqīm (inscription\*) were unusual out of Our signs? [9]**

When the young men took refuge in the Cave and said, "Our Lord, bless us with mercy from Your own and provide us with guidance in our matters." [10] So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years. [11] Thereafter We raised them up, so that We know which of the two groups had best calculated the period they remained (sleeping). [12]

### Lexical Explanation

Kahf is a large mountainous cave or cavern. If not large, it will be a *ghār*. The word: الرقيم (*al-raqīm*) literally denotes: المرقوم (*al-marqūm*) that is, something written. What does it mean at this place? The sayings of commentators differ about it. Ḍaḥḥāk, Sudiyy and Ibn Jubayr following the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ declare it to mean a written tablet on which the ruler of the time had inscribed the names of the People of Kahf and had it fixed on the entrance to the Cave. For this reason, the People of Kahf are also called the People of al-Raqīm (the inscribed ones). Qatādah, 'Aṭiyyah, 'Awfī and Mujāhid have said that Raqīm is the name of the valley adjoining the mountain in which the hol-

\* The word Raqīm has been interpreted differently. Most of the commentators have preferred 'inscription' while others have taken it to be a mountain, a valley or a specific town.

low cavern of the People of Kahf was located. Some others have identified this mountain itself as the Raqīm. 'Ikrimah رحمه الله تعالى says, "I have heard Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه saying - I do not know whether Raqīm is the name of some inscribed tablet or some town." Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās that Raqīm is the name of a town near Ailah, that is, 'Aqabah, situated in the kingdom of the Romans.

*Fityah* (فَيْتَة) in verse 10 is the plural of: فَيّ: *fatā*, which means a young man.

The expression: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ آذَانِهِمْ (translated as 'so, We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep]' - 11) literally means to plug ears to prevent someone from hearing. It is used to convey the sense of deep sleep. When sleeping, eyes close first but ears remain active. Sounds are heard. When sleep takes over completely, ears stop functioning. Later, when awake, ears resume their function first for sound startles the person sleeping who then comes out of his sleep.

## Commentary

### The story of the People of Kahf and Raqīm

There are a few subjects of study in this story. First of all, it needs to be determined whether People of Kahf and People of Raqīm are two names of the same group, or these are two separate groups. Though, no clarification of this appears in any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, but Imām al-Bukhārī, in his Ṣaḥīḥ, has given two separate chapter headings - Aṣḥāb al-Kahf and Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm. Then, under Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm, he mentions the well-known story of three persons being locked shut into a cave with no way out, which opened later through prayers, and which is there in details in all books of Ḥadīth. From this innovative device of Imām al-Bukhārī, it is gathered that, according to him, the People of Kahf are one group, and the appellation of the People of Raqīm has been used for those three persons who had taken shelter in the cave at some earlier time. Then a huge rock from the mountain fell on the entrance to the cave and blocked it totally, making it impossible for them to come out. At that moment, it was with reference to whatever righteous deeds they each had done in life that the three of them supplicated before Allah: Our Lord, if we had done this thing for Your good pleasure, please open the passage for us. Following the prayer of the first person, the rock

moved a little and light started coming in. By the prayer of the second one, it moved a little more. Then, by the prayer of the third one, the passage opened up fully.

But, Ḥafīẓ ibn Ḥajar has made it clear in Sharḥ al-Bukhārī that, in the light of Ḥadīth reports, there is no clear-cut proof about the People of Raqīm being the name for the three persons referred to above. What has happened here is that some narrators have added to the report of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ؓ, a reporter of the incident of the cave, by saying that Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ؓ while mentioning the story of the cave said, 'I heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioning Raqīm. He was relating the story of the three who got shut into the cave.' This addition appears in the report of al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī as quoted by Fath-al-Bārī. But, to begin with, none of the reports from the usual narrators of this Ḥadīth which are available in details in the six Ṣaḥīḥs and other books of Ḥadīth have included this sentence of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ؓ. Even the report of al-Bukhārī itself does not have this sentence in it. Then, even within this sentence, it has not been made clear whether or not the Holy Prophet ﷺ had called those three persons who got shut into the cave by the name of the People of Raqīm. In fact, the words are: 'he was mentioning Raqīm.' Those three were mentioned as a corollary to this statement. As for the difference in the sayings of the Ṣaḥābah, Ṭabī'īn and commentators in general concerning the meaning of Raqīm, it is by itself a proof that there was no Ḥadīth reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the meaning of Raqīm as determined by him. Otherwise, how was it possible that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself determines the meaning of a word, the Ṣaḥābah, Ṭabī'īn and other commentators opt for some other saying contrary to it? Therefore, Ḥafīẓ ibn Ḥajar, the commentator of al-Bukhārī, denies that the People of Kahf and the People of Raqīm are two separate groups. According to him, the correct position is that both these names apply to one single group. The mention of three persons getting shut into a cave could have been made with the mention of Raqīm. It does not necessarily follow from it that these very three persons were 'the Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm' (the People of Raqīm).

Ḥafīẓ ibn Ḥajar has also clarified at this place that the very context of the story of the People of Kahf as described by the Qur'ān tells us that

the People of Kahf and Raqīm are but one group. This is why the majority of commentators and Ḥadīth experts agree that they both are one and the same.

The second issue to be determined here is that of the details of the story. It has two parts. Part one is the spirit of the story, and the real objective. It provides an answer to the question asked by the Jews, and guidance and good counsel for Muslims as well. The second part deals with the historical and geographical aspects of the story. As for the delineation of the objective, it plays no role there, for instance: When and where did this event come to pass, who was the infidel king these people ran from and hid in the cave? What were his beliefs, what did he actually do to them because of which they were compelled to run and hide in the cave? How many were they? Exactly how long did they remain asleep? Are they still alive or are they dead?

The Holy Qurʾān, under its wise principles and unique methodology, has not related any story in all its detail and order throughout the Qurʾān (with the sole exception of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام) - a common method used in books of history. Instead, it has introduced only a part of each story that was appropriate to the occasion and was particularly related to guiding and teaching human beings. (The reason for excluding the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the parameter of this method appears in the Tafsīr of Sūrah Yūsuf included in Volume V, pages 24, 25)

The same method was used in relating the story of the People of Kahf. Here, the Qurʾān has described its particular parts that were relevant to the real objective. No mention was made of the remaining parts that were purely historical or geographical. Of course, mention was made of the number of the People of Kahf. The questions regarding the period of time they remained asleep were certainly alluded to, even an indication was released towards the answer but, along with it, an instruction was also given that it was not appropriate to investigate and debate such issues. These should be entrusted with Allah Taʿālā. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was duty-bound to explain the meanings of the Holy Qurʾān never related those parts of the story in any Ḥadīth. It is on the grounds of this Qurʾānic methodology that great men among the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabīʿīn have declared the essential policy guideline in such matters by saying:



أَبْهَمُوا مَا أَبْهَمَهُ اللَّهُ (الاتقان للسيوطي)

What Allah has left undetermined, you too leave it undetermined. (al-Itqān li-Suyūfī)

This approach and conduct of leading Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabīʿīn required that, in this Tafsīr too, those parts of the story should be ignored as ignored by the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. But, this is a time when historical and geographical breakthroughs are taken as great achievements. Therefore, later day scholars of Tafsīr have described those parts as well in varying lengths. As far as Tafsīr Maʿāriful-Qurʾān is concerned, the parts of the story that have already been mentioned in the Qurʾān will be covered under the explanation of its verses. The remaining historical and geographical parts of the story are being described here within the limits of their need. However, the truth of the matter is that, even after this description, the end result will remain the same - that is, it is impossible to arrive at a categorical decision in these matters. The reason is that writings in Islamic, and then Christian history, relating to this subject are so different, even contradictory, that one writer determines something in the light of his investigation, opinion and evidence while the other prefers something else.

### **Events relating to hiding in caves to protect faith have been many and widespread**

One major reason for differences existing among historians lies in the great importance attached to monasticism by adherents to the faith brought by Sayyidnā ʿĪsā عليه السلام. As a result, there were several instances spread around different regions and countries of the world where some people took shelter in caves to devote themselves to the worship of Allah Taʿālā living there for the rest of their lives. Now, where so ever some such event has occurred, it was not so far out for a historian to suspect it to be that of the People of Kahf.

### **People of Kahf: Place and Period**

Tafsīr authority al-Qurṭubī of al-Andulus (Spain) has reported some events at this juncture in his Tafsīr. Some of these events, that belong to different cities, he had heard or seen himself. First of all, he says on the basis of a report from Ḍaḥḥāk that al-Raqīm is the name of a town in Rūm (the Greco-Roman territory) where twenty-one men are lying in a

cave as if they are sleeping. Then, he reports from Tafsīr authority, Ibn 'Aṭīyyah that he had heard from many people that there was a cave in Shām (Syria) which had some dead bodies in it. Attendants said that they were the ones called the People of Kahf. And adjacent to the cave, there was the structure of a mosque and residential house called Raqīm. In addition to the dead bodies, the skeleton of a dead dog was also present there.

Then, al-Qurṭubī writes about another event relating to al-Gharnāṭah (Granada) in al-Andulus (Spain), again reporting from Ibn 'Aṭīyyah who says, 'there is a cave in Lawshah (Lojah), a village outside al-Gharnāṭah. It has some dead bodies and along with these there is the skeleton of a dead dog as well. Most of the dead bodies have no flesh left reducing them to bare skeletons. However, some do have signs of flesh and skin still being there. Centuries have passed over this. But, nothing is known about them authentically. Some people say that they were the People of Kahf. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah further says, 'when I heard this news, I personally went there in the Hijrah year 504. On arrival there, I really found those bodies in the same state. Close by there is a mosque and a structure of the Roman period called Raqīm. It seems to have been some palace from the remains of several walls still there. This thing is located in an unpopulated area with wild growth around. He also said, 'remains of an old city are found in the area characterized by higher altitudes in al-Gharnāṭah. It is Roman in style. The name of the city is said to be Raqyus. We have seen many graves and strange things in its ruins.' From what has been said here it will be realized that al-Qurṭubī who lived in Spain avoids calling anyone as the People of Kahf definitely, despite that he has described these events as reported. Then, there is the case of Ibn 'Aṭīyyah who, despite his personal observation, did not claim that they were the People of Kahf. He rather limits himself to reporting what was popular. But, Abū Ḥayyān, the seventh century commentator from al-Andulus (Spain) was born in al-Gharnāṭah itself in Hijrah year 654. There he was raised and there he lived. He too mentions the cave of al-Gharnāṭah in his Tafsīr, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, very much like al-Qurṭubī has done. After having written about the eye witness account of Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, he says, 'when I was in al-Andulus (that is, before shifting to Cairo), many people went to see this cave. They used to say that, despite

that those bodies are still there and the visitors do count them out but, somehow, they always make a mistake in giving their correct number.' After that he said, 'as for the city of Raqyus mentioned by Ibn 'Aṭīyyah which is located on the side of al-Gharnāṭah that faces the Qiblah, I have myself passed by it so many times and I have seen unusually large rocks in it.' After that, he says: " و يترجح كون اهل الكهف بالاندلس لكثرة دين النصارى بها " (one reason for preferring the possibility of the People of Kahf being in al-Andulus could be that it is predominantly Christian to the extent that this particular region is their largest religious center - Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 102, v. 6).

Tafsīr authority Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim following a report of 'Awfī from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ say that Raqīm is the name of a valley which is located near Ailah ('Aqabah) south of Palestine. And the two of them along with other Ḥadīth experts also report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that he said, 'I do not know what Raqīm is. But, when I asked Ka'b al-Aḥbār, he said that Raqīm is the name of the town where the People of the Kahf lived before going into the Cave.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim report Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ to have said, 'we waged a Jihād against Byzantine forces in the company of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ؓ which is known as the battle of al-Maḍīq (المضيق). On this trip, we passed through the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. The Qur'ān mentions it. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah wanted to go into the cave and see the bodies of the People of Kahf. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said, 'let us not do so because Allah Ta'ālā has already prohibited someone better than you from seeing them, that is, the Rasūl of Allah. Is it not that Allah says in the Qur'an: لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them - 18)? But, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah did not accept this suggestion of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās perhaps for the reason that the state in which they were portrayed by the Qur'ān related to the time when they were alive and it was not necessary that they would still be found in the same state. Therefore, a few men were sent to have a look at them. They reached the cave. But, when they wanted to enter into the cave, Allah Ta'ālā sent a punishing wind upon them that turned all of them out and away from the cave. (Rūḥ

al-Ma'ānī p. 227, v. 15)

The reports and narratives appearing above establish that commentators have given three locations for the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. Firstly, in Ailah near 'Aqabah on the shore of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. Most of the narrations from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās favor this interpretation.

From the personal observation of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, and Abū Ḥayyān's support, it seems likely that this cave is in al-Gharnāṭah, al-Andulus (Spain). Out of these two places, the name of a city or particular building has also been given as Raqīm. Similarly, the name of the great structure in ruins close to the cave in al-Gharnāṭah has been cited as Raqīm. Then, none of the two kinds of reports decisively say that this cave was The Cave of the People of Kahf. Both rely on popular local talk and oral tradition. As for the old name of the city where the People of Kahf lived, it has been mentioned as Iḥsūs (Ephesus as in the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians - Holy Bible, p. 239), with Ṭarsūs as its Islamic name, in nearly all Tafsīr reports of al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān and Ibn Jarīr. That this city was located on the western coast of Asia Minor is a fact accepted by historians. This shows that the Cave is also within Asia Minor. Therefore, there is no proof to declare any one of these as true and the rest as false. As for probability, all three are probable. In fact, no one can deny the very probability that the events relating to these caves, despite being true, may not be relevant to the Cave of the People of Kahf that has been mentioned in the Qur'ān. May be, it is somewhere else. And it is also not necessary that Raqīm at this place may exclusively be the name of some city or building. In fact, no one can reject even the probability that Raqīm denotes the inscription engraved with the names of the People of Kahf on a tablet and placed on the entrance to the cave by some king.

### Investigations of Modern Historians

Some contemporary historians have made considerable efforts to determine the place and time of the Cave of the People of Kahf with the help of Christian and European historical accounts.

Abūl-Kalām Āzād has declared the present city of Petra near Ailah ('Aqabah) - Arabicized by Arab historians as Baṭrā - as the old city of Raqīm. With reference to current historical accounts, he reports the rem-

nants of a cave in the mountain and of some mosque adjacent to it. In confirmation, he refers to the Book of Joshua in the Old Testament (18:27) where the place has been mentioned as Raqm or Raqīm. According to him, this is the place now called Petra. But, this has been considered doubtful as the reference to Raqm or Raqīm in the Book of Joshua is connected with the inheritance of Banī bin Yamin (Benyamin). Then, this territory was located west of River Jordan and the Dead Sea where the city of Petra could have not possibly been located. Therefore, contemporary archaeologists are very reluctant in accepting Petra and Raqīm as one and the same. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1946, v. 17, p. 658)

Commentators in general have pointed out to the city of Ifsūs, a major Byzantine city on the western coast of Asia Minor the remains of which are still found twenty or twenty five miles south of the modern Turkish city of Izmir (Samarna).

Maulanā Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī while mentioning the city of Petra in his book, Arḍ al-Qurʿān, has put Raqīm in parenthesis. But, he has not given any evidence in support of the proposition that the old name of the city of Petra was Raqīm. Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān Sihwārī has also adopted this view. For evidence, he refers to Torah: The book of Numbers and the book of Isaiah and gives the name of Petra as Raqīmāh. (Dāʿirah al-Maʿārif al-ʿArabiyah)

When a cave was discovered in a desolate jungle area close to ʿAm-mān in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Archaeological Department of the Government started digging operations on that site in the year 1963. After having removed the upper strata of topsoil and rocks, they found six coffins filled with bones and stones, and two graves. Towards the south side of the cave, they found inscriptions on rocks in Byzantine script. Local people think that this is the place called Raqīm close to which is this cave of the People of Kahf. Allah knows best.

My revered teacher and master, Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī, relying on Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī, has reported the following historical account of the place and time of the People of Kahf. According to this account, when the People of Kahf had escaped the tyranny of the king of the time and taken shelter in the cave, the time was the year 250 A.D. Then they remained asleep for three hundred years. Thus, it comes to a total of 550

A.D. And the Holy Prophet ﷺ was born in 570 A.D. Therefore, this event of their wakening occurred twenty years before the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, in Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī as well, their locale has been determined as the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs that used to be in Asia Minor. Its ruins still remain. And Allah knows best the reality of it.

These historical and geographical details have been given here from the reports of classical commentators, then from contemporary historians. This humble writer had already submitted that neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on these, nor does any essential part of the objective for which the Qur'ān has related this story belongs thereto. Then, relevant reports and stories and their indicators and connections are so different that, despite all investigations and efforts, it is just not possible to take any categorical decision in this matter. Having preferences and inclinations is all that is left to do here. But, in our time, educated people have acquired an increased taste in historical investigations. It is for this satisfaction that these details have been reported for they, by way of introduction and hypothesis, tell us at least this much that this event came to pass after Sayyidnā 'Isa عليه السلام close to the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And that most reports seem to agree on this being near the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs. Even then, Allah knows best. And the truth is that we, after all these investigations, are standing where we had started from - that there is no need to fix an exact location, nor can this be fixed with any certain modality. The Tafsīr and Ḥadīth authority, Ibn Kathīr has said exactly this about it:

قَدْ أَخْبَرَنَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِذَلِكَ وَأَرَادَ مِنَّا فَهْمَهُ، وَتَدْبِيرَهُ، وَلَمْ يُخْبِرْنَا بِمَكَانٍ هَذَا الْكَهْفِ فِي أَىِّ الْبِلَادِ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ إِذْ لَا فَايْدَةَ لَنَا فِيهِ وَلَا قَصْدَ شَرْعِيٍّ

Allah Ta'ālā has already told us about that. And He expects us to understand it and deliberate into it. And He did not tell us about the location of this Cave in a particular city out of this earth because there is nothing beneficial for us in it nor does any religious objective hinge upon it - Ibn Kathīr, v. 3, p. 75.

### **When did the event relating to the People of Kahf come to pass and why did they take shelter in the Cave?**

This segment of the story is also the same upon which neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend, nor does it influence the objective of the story in any significant way, nor do the Qur'ān

and Sunnah make any statement about it. What we have here is no more than historical stories. Therefore, in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Commentator Abū Ḥayyān has said:

وَالرَّوَاةُ مُخْتَلِفُونَ فِي قِصَصِهِمْ وَكَيْفَ كَانَ اجْتِمَاعُهُمْ وَخُرُوجُهُمْ وَلَمْ يَأْتِ فِي  
الْحَدِيثِ الصَّحِيحِ كَيْفِيَّةُ ذَلِكَ وَلَا فِي الْقُرْآنِ -

And narrators differ in stories about them, and about how they got together and moved out, and the mode and manner of that has neither been mentioned in any authentic Ḥadīth nor in the Qur'ān - al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 101, v. 6.

However, when we provided some information about the site of the remnants of the People of Kahf a little earlier, it was in consideration of the curiosity of contemporary temperament. For the same reason, we are providing here brief notes of information regarding the period and causes of the passing of this event from exegetic and historical reports. As for a detailed and comprehensive description of this story, the respected scholar, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh Pānīpatī has reported it on the authority of different narratives in his Tafsīr Maḥzarī. But, given here is a brief version of the event that Ibn Kathīr has presented with reference to many early and later commentators. He says:

"The Aṣḥāb al-Kahf were the progeny of kings and chiefs among their people who were idol-worshippers. Once their people went out of the town to participate in some religious festival of theirs. This was a place where they met every year, worshipped their idols and sacrificed animals to please them. Their king was a tyrant. Called Daqyānūs, he used to force his people to worship idols. That year, when everyone had gathered together in this festival, these young men identified as the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf also reached there and saw their people taking rocks carved with their own hands as God, worshipping them and sacrificing for them. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with the good sense to shun this absurd practice of their people. Thus, when they used their reason, they arrived at the conclusion that this worship belongs to none but that supreme Power who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. This thought crossed the minds of those few young men simultaneously and they started moving away from there to avoid the absurd practice of their people in the fair name of worship. The first young man who withdrew went far from the crowd and sat down under a

tree. After that, came another and he too sat there. Similarly, came the third, and the fourth, and each one of them kept taking a seat under the tree. But, none of them were familiar with each other, nor did they know as to why they had come there. The truth of the matter is that they were brought together on that spot by the Power that lit the light of faith in their hearts."

### **The real foundation of nationalism and collectivism**

After having transmitted that, Ibn Kathīr comments that people tend to take nationalism and common race as the cause of cohesion and union in social life. But, the reality lies in what has been said in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, that unity or disunity first germinates in souls, then it affects the bodies in this world. Souls that have experienced congruity and unity among them in *'azal* (eternity) go on to become mutually connected and get molded into the form of a confraternity. As for those that did not have the experience of this mutual congruity and unity - in fact, remained separated there - they will remain separated here too. Take this very event as an example and see how the same thought crossed everyone's mind separately and it was this thought that brought everyone unconsciously together.

In short, these people got together at one place all right, but everyone was concealing his belief from the other lest this person reports him to the king and he gets arrested. After having remained there all together in silence, one of them spoke out, 'brothers, there must be some reason why all of us have broken away from our people and reached here. It seems appropriate that we all should get to know each other's thoughts.' Thereupon, one person declared, 'the truth is that the faith and worship in which I found my people involved gave me the certitude that this whole thing is false. 'Ibādah or worship should be for One Allah who is most exalted in His majesty and who has no partner or associate in the act of the creation of this universe.' This broke the ice. Others were prompted to speak out and they all declared that this was the thought, the belief that separated them from their people and brought them there.

Now they were an ideologically unified group enjoying mutual fellowship and friendship. They set up a separate House of Worship for themselves where they would assemble and worship Allah who is One and



who has no partner in His divinity.

But, by and by they became the talk of the town. Backbiters told on them before the king who ordered that they all should be brought to him. When they came into the royal court, the king asked them about their belief and its mores. Allah gave them the courage to state their belief in the Oneness of Allah. In fact, they invited the king himself to believe as they did. This is precisely what has been mentioned in the verses appearing next: *وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُوَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا* (And We made their hearts firm. And when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth. These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah?" - al-Kahf, 18:14,15)

When these young men acted bold before the king and invited him to believe, he turned the call down and threatened them with drastic action. He had the princely robes they donned on their bodies taken off in reprisal so that they may think and change their behavior. In order that they actually do so, he gave them respite for a few days saying that they were young, therefore, he did not wish to kill them right away. In fact, he wanted them to have the time to think over it. Then, if they reverted to the faith of their people, they will be allowed to live as usual, otherwise they would be killed.

It must have been the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā on His believing servants that this respite given to them opened an escape door for them. They ran from there and took refuge in a cave.

Usual reports carried by commentators agree that these people were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ عليه السلام. Ibn Kathīr and most commentators have mentioned it. However, Ibn Kathīr has not accepted it. According to him, had these people been the followers of the Christian faith, the Jews of Madīnah would have not suggested that a question be asked about them just because of their mutual hostility and thus would have not given them that importance. But, this is not a sufficient basis because of which all reports should be rejected. When the Jews of Madīn-

ah proposed that such a question should be asked, they were simply looking at it as a unique event - very similar to the question about Dhul-Qarnain which was also on that basis. That there was no Jewish-Christian prejudice involved in questions of this nature is fairly obvious here.

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, based on a report from Ibn Ishāq, these people have been identified as monotheists who, after the decline of the original Christian faith, were among the rare remnants still adhering to the true faith of the Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام and to pure monotheism. In this report of Ibn Ishāq too, the name of the oppressive king has been given as Daqyānūs while the city in which these young men lived before they went into hiding in the cave has been called Ifsūs.

Then, the event has been described in the same manner in the report of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as well and the name of the king has been given as Daqyānūs. The report of Ibn Ishāq also adds that the name of the king of the people who were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā Masīḥ and had taken over the country at the time the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf woke up was Baidūsis.

So, at least the strong likelihood of the People of Kahf being committed to the true faith brought by Sayyidnā 'Isa Masīḥ عليه السلام stands proved from the reports as a whole, and that they belong to the post-Masīḥ period, and that the Mushrik king they ran from was called Daqyānūs. At the time they woke up after three hundred and nine years, the name of the righteous and believing king who ruled the country has been named as Baidūsis in the report of Ibn Ishāq. If this is seen in conjunction with the contemporary calendar, it is possible to determine their period, at the least as a matter of conjecture and approximation. Trying to determine it any more than that is needless, nor there exist the means to acquire this knowledge.

### **Are the People of Kahf still alive?**

In this matter, the correct and obvious approach is that they have died. Tafsīr Maẓharī carries the detailed report of Ibn Ishāq. According to this report, when the People of Kahf woke up, their unique event became the talk of the town. They went to meet the king. When they took leave of king Baidūsis, they bid farewell to him and prayed for him. The

king was still there when they went back to the place only to lie down where they had been lying for such a long time. And that was exactly when Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them.

At this stage, the following report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has been reproduced by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and many more from among the commentators:

قَالَ قَتَادَةُ غَزَا ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ مَعَ حَبِيبِ بْنِ مَسْلَمَةَ فَمَرُّوا بِكَهْفٍ فِي بِلَادِ الرُّومِ فَرَأَوْا فِيهِ عِظَامًا فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ هَذِهِ عِظَامُ أَهْلِ الْكَهْفِ فَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ لَقَدْ بَلَّيَتْ عِظَامُهُمْ مِنْ أَكْثَرِ مِنْ ثَلَاثِمِائَةِ سَنَةٍ (ابن كثير)

Qatādah says that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه participated in a Jihād in the company of Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah when they passed by a cave in the Roman territory. There they saw bones in it. Then someone said, 'These are the bones of the People of Kahf.' Thereupon, Ibn 'Abbās said, 'The bones of them have already become dust more than three hundred years ago' - Ibn Kathīr.

These were particular segments of the story that were neither described by the Qur'ān, nor by the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In addition to that, neither does some specified purpose of this event or the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on it - nor can any categorical decision be arrived at in these matters on the basis of historical reports. As far as the remaining segments of the story already described within the text of the Qur'ān are concerned, their details appear under the commentary on relevant verses.

Up to this point, the Qur'ān had mentioned this story in brief. Details follow.

### Verses 13 - 16

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاهَهُم بِالْحَقِّ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾ وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُوهُ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطًا ﴿١٤﴾ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا ۖ لَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ

أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا عَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يُعْبُدُونَ  
إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَأَوْا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِنْ  
أَمْرِكُمْ مِرْفَقًا ﴿١٤﴾

We narrate to you their story with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord and We increased, them in guidance. [13] And We made their hearts firm and when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth. [14] These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a clear proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah? [15]

And when you have turned away from them, and those they worship, except Allah, then seek refuge in the cave and your Lord will unfold His mercy for you and provide you ease in your matters." [16]

### Commentary

The word: *فِتْيَةٍ* (*fityah*) in: *إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ* (They were young men - 13) is the plural of: *فَتًى* (*fatā*) which means someone young. According to Tafsīr scholars, this word indicates that the time ripe for correction of deeds and morals, and the inculcation of guidance and righteousness, is invariably the time when one is young. When old, formerly acquired deeds and morals become so deeply rooted that - no matter how evident becomes the truth against these - it is very difficult to break loose from their shackles. Those among the noble Companions who responded to and believed in the call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were, after all, mostly young people. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The first sentence of verse 14: *وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ* (And We made their hearts firm) refers to the event described by Ibn Kathīr a little earlier. This tells us that Allah made the hearts of these people firm when the king who was cruel and worshipped idols summoned them in his court and questioned them. This was a matter of life and death. But, despite their apprehension for the worst, Allah Ta'ālā made His love, awe and grandeur prevail over their hearts which empowered them to face any

eventuality of death or distress. The outcome was that they proclaimed their belief clearly and courageously saying that they did not worship anyone or anything other than Allah and would not do that in future as well. People who firmly resolve to do something for the sake of Allah, this is how they receive help from Allah Ta'ālā.

About the verse: فَأَرَا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ (then seek refuge in the Cave - 16), Ibn Kathīr says that the course adopted by the People of Kahf was that they left the city in which it was not possible to worship Allah and took refuge in the Cave. This is the Sunnah, the way of all prophets. They migrate from such places and opt for a place where 'Tbādah could be done.

### Verses 17 - 18

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَزْوُرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ تَقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ مِنْهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا ﴿١٧﴾ وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ آيَاقًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ ۚ وَتَقْلِبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ ۚ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ ۚ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمَلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا ﴿١٨﴾

And you see the sun, when it rises, it turns away from their Cave towards the right; and when it sets, it bypasses them towards the left - and they are in the hollow thereof. That is one of the signs of Allah. Whomsoever Allah guides is the one who gets the right path and whomsoever He lets go astray, you will find for him no one to help, no one to lead. [17] And you think they are awake while they are asleep. And We turn them on their sides, right and left. And their dog has its forelegs stretched out to the doorstep. If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them. [18]

### Commentary

In these verses, Allah Ta'ālā has told us about three states of the Peo-

ple of Kahf. All three are indeed unique and it was the *karāmah*, a matter of wonder, that manifested itself in an extraordinary way around these people devoted to Allah (a thing of wonder that manifests itself at the hands of a prophet of Allah is called a *mu'jizah* or miracle, while if it appears at the hand of some other pious persons, it is called 'Karāmah').

First of all, to be overtaken by continuous sleep for a long time and to stay alive in that state without eating and drinking is by itself a matter of wonder, and certainly contra-habitual and extraordinary. Its details will appear in the verses that follow. Given here is one state of their long sleep, that is, Allah Ta'ālā had arranged for their protection in the Cave in a way that the Sun would pass by them morning and evening but would not shine over their bodies inside the Cave. The advantages of the sunshine passing by them were things like the stabilization of the traces of life, moderation and balancing of the effects of wind, chill and heat etc. And then, the Sun not hitting their bodies directly may have also been a factor in keeping their bodies and dress protected.

This arrangement of keeping them shielded from direct sunlight could also be conceived if the cave lies situated in a particular structural position and the opening of its entrance happens to face south or north in a way that sunlight does not get in there naturally. Ibn Qutaibah went to the trouble of making elaborate mathematical calculations to determine the peculiar location of this Cave precisely in terms of latitude and longitude. (Maḏharī) Contrary to this was the approach of al-Zajjaj who said that the staying of sunshine away from them was not because of any inherent situation or formation of the Cave, instead, it was an extraordinary phenomenon manifested as a *karāmah*. It seems when it was said: *ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ* (That is one of the signs of Allah) at the end of the verse, it was obviously there to prove that this arrangement of protection from the Sun was not the outcome of any particular formation or location of the Cave. Instead, it was a sign of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. (Qurṭubī)

To put it candidly, Allah Ta'ālā had it all arranged for them that sunlight will not reach their bodies. It may have been caused through its particular formation or location, or through the barrier of a cloud or something similar when the Sun would start shining, or the very rays of the Sun would be moved away from them in an extraordinary manner.

All these probabilities exist within the verse. There is no need to insist upon fixing any of these as the absolute reality.

### **The People of Kahf during their long sleep were in a state that an onlooker would have taken them to be awake**

The second state of the People of Kahf pointed out is that there were no signs of sleep on their bodies in spite of having been put to sleep for such a long period of time. In fact, they were in a condition that anyone who looked at them would think that they were awake. Generally, commentators say that their eyes were open. The body is relaxed in sleep but this relaxation was not there. The change in the momentum of breathing that comes upon the sleeping was also not there. It is obvious that this state too was nothing short of being extraordinary, a kind of Thaumaturgy (*karāmah*), in which the apparent consideration of wisdom was their protection lest someone taking them to be asleep attacks them, or steals things with them. Then, the changing of sides to the right and the left could also give an onlooker the realization of their being awake. And then, there was a particular benefit as well in changing sides - in that the dust they were sleeping on does not eat into an unchanged side.

### **The dog of the People of Kahf**

At this point, we have a question on our hands. It appears in an authentic Ḥadīth that angels do not enter a house that has a dog or picture. Then, there is a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. There, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever keeps a dog, except the one used for hunting or guarding livestock, has two *qirāts* deducted every day from his reward (*qirāt* or *karat* is the name of a small weight)." And in the report narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, there is the exception of a third kind of dog, that is, a dog kept to guard land produce.

Based on these Ḥadīth reports, one can ask as to why did these worthy men of Allah take a dog with them? One answer to this could be that the prohibition of keeping a dog is an injunction of the Sharī'ah brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it is possible that it may not be so prohibited in the Sharī'ah (law) brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ ؑ. Then, it is reasonably imaginable that these people who had property and livestock may have kept a dog for their protection from intruders and since the faithfulness of a dog is well known, the dog followed them

when they went out from the city.

### **Good Company is a Blessing - Even for a dog!**

Ibn 'Aṭiyyah says that his father told him that he heard a sermon of Abū al-Faḍl Jawharī in the Hijrah year 469 at the Great Mosque of Egypt. Speaking on the Mimbar, he was telling everyone, 'whoever loves good people, he too gets a share from their goodness. See when the dog of the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf loved them and followed them closely as if appended with them, Allah Ta'ālā mentioned it in the Qur'ān'.

Al-Qurṭubī mentions this report of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah in his Tafsīr. In his comments, he says when a dog can reach this station by being in the company of the righteous and the saintly, imagine how high the station of true believers and pure monotheists who love righteous men of Allah would be. In fact, there is comfort and good news in this event for Muslims who are weak in deeds but do love the Holy Prophet ﷺ fully and duly.

It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه said, "One day, I and the Holy Prophet ﷺ were coming out of the Masjid. We met a person at the door. He asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, when will the Qiyāmah come?" He said, "What preparations have you already made for Qiyāmah? (In view of which you want it to come soon)." Hearing this, the man was somewhat ashamed and corrected himself by saying, "I have not collected a lot of prayers, fasts and charities for Qiyāmah, but I love Allah and His Messenger." He said, "If so, [on the day of Qiyāmah] you shall be with those whom you love." Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه says, "when we heard this bliss of a sentence from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, we were so happy that we had never been that happy since we embraced Islam." After that, Sayyidnā Anas said, "[*al-ḥamdulillāh*] I love Allah, His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما, therefore, I look forward to being with them." (Qurṭubī)

### **Allah Ta'ālā had invested the People of Kahf with such awe as would make an onlooker run in terror**

The address in verse 18: *لَوْ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ* (If you had a look at them) is apparently to people at large. Therefore, it does not necessarily follow from it that the Holy Prophet ﷺ too could be filled up with awe generated by the state of the People of Kahf in their Cave. So, the address here is to



common people. They are being told that, were they to cast a look at them in that state, they would have fled away from them in terror and the resulting awe of them would have gripped them all over.

What was the basis of this awe and what were the reasons for it? This is something in which debate is useless - therefore, the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not explained it. The truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His wisdom, had created such conditions for their protection that the Sun stays away from their bodies, and the onlooker takes them to be awake and is filled with awe of them and is consequently unable to see them fully. It is possible to have these conditions prevail by way of particular physical causes as well as by way of an extraordinary input or as the working of wonder (*karāmah*). Now, when the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not determined any particular reason for it, debating it with hollow conjectures is futile. Preferring this approach, Tafsīr Maḥḥarī cites Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in support. They have reported an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ who says: 'we waged a Jihād against Byzantine forces in the company of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ؓ which is known as the battle of al-Maḍīq (المضيق). On this trip, we passed through the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. The Qur'ān mentions it. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah wanted to go into the Cave and see the bodies of the People of Kahf. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said, 'let us not do so because Allah Ta'ālā has already prohibited someone better than you from seeing them, that is, the Rasūl of Allah.' Then, he recited this very verse: لَوْ أَطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (If you had a look at them, you would have fled from them and would have been filled with awe of them - 18). [This tells us that, in the sight of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the address in لَوْ أَطَّلَعْتَ (If you had a look) was to the Holy Prophet]. But, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah did not accept his opinion [perhaps, because he may have taken the address as being to common people and not to the Holy Prophet ﷺ]. Or, it may be that the Qur'ān has portrayed the condition of the time when the People of Kahf were alive and asleep. Now a long time had passed since they died. It was not likely that they would still have the same atmosphere of awe around them]. However, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, with his position unchanged, sent a few men to find out the facts. But, when they stepped into the Cave, Allah Ta'ālā sent a hot wind upon them because of which they could not see anything.

(Maẓharī) (This report was also referred earlier under 'The People of Kahf: Place and Period')

### Verses 19 - 20

وَكَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ۖ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ ۖ فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ ۚ وَلَا يَشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿١٩﴾ إِنَّهُمْ إِن يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذَا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

And similarly We raised them up so that they ask each other. One of them said, "How long did you stay?" They said, "A day, or part of a day." They said, "Your Lord knows best how long you stayed." So, send one of you with this silver (coin) of yours to the city and let him look around which of the eatables are the purest and let him bring you some food therefrom. And he must be polite and must not let anyone know about you. [19] If they know about you, they will force you to revert to their faith and in that case, you will never find success. [20]

### Commentary

The word: كَذَلِكَ (*kadhālik*) in the first sentence is for comparison. The purpose at this place is to describe the mutual likeness of two events. One of these is the event of the long sleep of the People of Kahf for an equally long period of time mentioned in the beginning of the story under the verse: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا : "So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years - 11." The second event relates to the rising of these people from that long drawn sleep - intact, healthy and fit despite the absence of any energy-giving intake - and becoming wide awake. Both are alike in being signs of the power of Allah Ta'ālā. For this reason, when 'raising them up' was mentioned in this verse, the word: كَذَلِكَ (*kadhālik*: 'And similarly') was used to indicate that the way their sleep was not like the habitual sleep of common people, very similarly, their rising too was distinct from natural habit. Then, as for the next statement after that:

لَيَسْأَلُنَا meaning 'so that they ask each other [as to how long the sleep was],' it is not the reason of 'raising them up.' Instead, it is a mention of a usual phenomenon. Therefore, the particle: لام (*lām*) in: لَيَسْأَلُنَا (*liyatasa'alū*: so that they ask) has been identified as the *lām* of 'āqibah (consequence) or *sairūrah* (result) meaning that which naturally follows as a sequel. (Abū Ḥayyān, al-Qurṭubī)

In short, their long sleep was a Divine sign. Similarly, sitting up all awake after hundreds of years - fit and healthy without usual nourishment - was also another perfect Divine sign. And it was also Divinely intended that they too should come to know that they have been sleeping through hundreds of years, therefore, it began with questions asked between each other and ended at the incident mentioned in the next verse: وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْرَجْنَا (And in this way We made them known - 21). It means that the people of the city knew their secret and, despite the difference in determining the period of their stay, everyone believed that they had been sleeping in the Cave for a long period of time.

Given in: قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ (One of them said - 19) is the detail of what was said briefly at the beginning of the story (12) - that they differed about the period of their stay in the Cave and that one of them did say the right thing. According to this detail, one person from among the People of the Cave ventured to pose the question as to how long did they sleep. Then, came the response from some that said, 'a day, or part of a day' - because, these people had entered the Cave in the morning and when they woke up, it was evening. Therefore, they thought, that was the day they had entered the Cave and the duration of their sleep was just about a day. But, some from among these very people realized that, perhaps, this was not the day they had entered the Cave. If so, who knows how many days have gone by? Therefore, they decided to let this particular knowledge about the event rest with Allah. By saying: قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ (Your Lord knows best how long you stayed - 19), they dismissed this debate as unnecessary and turned their attention to the need of the hour, that is, to send a man to the city to bring some food from there.

The word: الْمَدِينَةِ (*al-madīnah*) in the phrase: إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ (*ila al-madīnah*: to the city) proves at least this much that there used to be a big city close to the Cave where they had stayed. In his Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said that the name of the city at the time the People of Kahf

left was Ifsūs and now, the name was Ṭarsūs. Al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that during the time idol-worship and ignorance prevailed in this city, its name was Ifsūs. But, when the believers of that time, that is, the followers of Sayyidnā Masiḥ (عليه السلام), overtook it, they renamed it as Ṭarsūs.

The word: **بِوَرَقِكُمْ** (with this silver [coin] of yours - 19) tells us that these good men had also brought some money with them when they came to the Cave. From here we know that the procurement and management of essential expenditures in life is not contrary to the norms of Zuhd (abstention from worldly desires) and Tawakkul (trust in Allah). (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The word: **أَزْكَى** (*azkā*) in: **أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا** (which are the purest - 19) means what is clean and pure. According to the Tafsīr of Ibn Jubayr, it denotes Ḥalāl food. They were alert to the need for such precaution because at the time they had left the city, people used to slaughter animals in the name of idols and that was what they sold in the market. Therefore, they stressed upon the man going out to bring food only after making sure that it was Ḥalāl.

### Ruling

This tells us that eating food in any city, bazaar or hotel, where most of the food available is Ḥarām, is not permissible without prior investigation.

The word: **رَجْمَ** (*rajm*) in: **أَوْ يُرْجَمُوكُمْ** means 'they will stone you to death - 19.' It will be recalled that the king had warned them - before they went to the Cave - that they will be killed if they kept adhering to their present faith. This verse tells us that a renegade in their faith used to be punished by being stoned to death in which everyone participated, expressed collective anger and lent a hand in killing him.

Perhaps, the punishment for adultery committed by a married man or woman by stoning to death, as proposed in the Shari'ah of Islam, may be aimed at exposing the one guilty of this abominable act at the cost of all norms of modesty and propriety. The execution of the culprit was to remain public with everyone joining in so that two things were ensured - let that disgrace be at collective level, and let all Muslims express their wrath practically so that no one dares repeat this act of shame among

them.

The expression: فَأَبْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ (So, send one of you - 19) tells us that the group in the Cave picked up a man from among them to go to the city and gave him the money to buy food which he would bring back. Al-Qurtubī finds this significant. He quotes Ibn Khuwaizmandād and describes some rulings deduced from here.

## Rulings

1. Partnership in capital is permissible - because, this amount was shared by all.
2. Power of attorney or delegation of management is permissible in capital, that is, one person can, as an authorized agent, disburse from shared capital with the permission of others.
3. If a group of people shares food, it is permissible - though, individual food intake usually differs with one eating less while the other, more.

## Verse 21

وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْتَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا إِذْ يَتَنَازَعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُيُوتًا رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا

﴿٢١﴾

**And in this way We made them known to the people so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour. When they were disputing among themselves in their matter, they said, "Erect a building over them. Their Lord knows them best." Said those who prevailed in their matter, "We will certainly make a *masjid* (mosque) over them." [21]**

## Commentary

Described in this verse which opens with the words: وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْتَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ (And in this way We made them known) is the disclosure of the secret of the People of Kahf before the residents of the city. Along with it given there is a view of His wisdom, and of the belief in the Hereafter and the

Last Day when the dead will rise again, and that they will ultimately believe in it. How this came about has been mentioned briefly in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as follows:

### **The secret of the People of Kahf:**

#### **How did the people of the city learn about it?**

When the People of Kahf went out, the Mushrik king Daqyānūs, the oppressive ruler of that city died. Centuries went by. Then, it was taken over by people who were pure monotheists. Their king was a righteous man (whose name has been given as Baidūsīs in Tafsīr Maḥzarī with references to historical narratives). During his time, it so happened that differences became rampant on the issue of the dead rising again on the day of Qiyāmah. One sect rejected the possibility of human bodies rising again after the process of decomposition, disintegration and dispersal as scattered particles all over the world. Baidūsīs, the king of the time, started worrying about ways to dispel these doubts. When nothing worked, he got into ragged clothes, sat down on a heap of ash and prayed to Allah. Lamenting and pleading earnestly, he said, 'O Allah, now it is up to Thee to make things work out in a way that the belief of my people gets corrected and they take to the right path.' On one side was this king engaged in his plaint and prayer while, on the other side, Allah Ta'ālā arranged to have his supplication answered in His own way. The People of Kahf woke up. They sent one of their men (reportedly named Tamlikha) to the city bazaar to buy food. He went to a shop and paid for the food he bought in the form of a silver coin dating back to the time of king Daqyānūs who reigned there three hundred years ago. The shopkeeper was taken aback. Where did this coin come from? What period does it belong to? He was confused. He showed it to other shopkeepers. Everyone said that the man had struck some treasure and was there with a coin from it. This man told them that nothing of that kind had happened to him and the coin was his own.

The shopkeepers detained him and produced him before the king. As said earlier, this king was a righteous man of Allah. It is said that he was aware of the old state treasure house and in its archaeological section he had also seen the tablet inscribed on which there was a list of the names of the People of Kahf along with the description of the incident of their escape. According to some, the cruel king Daqyānūs was the one

who had ordered that such a tablet should be inscribed to declare them as proclaimed offenders, to preserve their names and addresses and to have them arrested on sight. Some other reports say that there were people in the royal court who disapproved of idol-worship by heart and took the People of Kahf as votaries of truth. But, they did not have the courage to declare it openly. What they did was to have this tablet inscribed to be kept as memorabilia. The name of this tablet was Raqīm because of which the People of Kahf were also called the People of Raqīm.

So, this king knew something about this event and at that time he was busy praying to Allah that He would somehow make his people believe that making dead bodies rise again was not beyond His most perfect power.

Therefore, when he inquired into the background of Tamlikhā, he was convinced that the man was one of the People of Kahf. He said that he used to pray to Allah in the hope that He would somehow make him fortunate enough to meet the people who had run away from Daqyānūs for the sake of their faith. Now that Allah had perhaps heard his prayer, he was grateful. May be there is, in this event, some decisive proof that makes people believe in the rising of the dead. After saying this, he asked this man to take him to the Cave from where he had come.

The king arrived there with a retinue of people from the city. When the Cave came close, Tamlikhā asked the king to wait there for a while so that he could go in and inform his companions about the situation. He would tell them that the king was there to meet them along with his people and that the king was a believer, a monotheist and so were his people. If he failed to do that, and the king appeared there unannounced, it was likely that they might take him to be their enemy like the previous one. When Tamlikhā went in the Cave, he related the whole story before his companions. They were pleased. They greeted the king showing due respect for him. Then they returned to their Cave. And as most narratives have it, when Tamlikhā related the whole story before his companions, they died and could not meet the king. At this stage, Abū Ḥayyān has reported a narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ which says that after the meeting, the People of the Cave took leave of the king and the visiting citizens and went into the Cave. It was at that time that Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them. Allah knows best the reality as it is.

However, the people of the city now had before them a marvel of Divine power manifested so decisively and clearly. They came to believe in the working of that power. They saw living human beings kept alive for three hundred years without food and things essential in life. And then, they also saw them raised intact, healthy and fit after having been kept asleep for such a long time. With all this in view, why should it be at all difficult for that power to make these bodies come alive after having met their death? Through this event, their perception that the resurrection of bodies was a far out proposition stood refuted. They now realized that taking the Power of the master of the universes on the analogy of the power of human beings was an act of ignorance by itself.

A hint was made towards this very aspect in the words: **لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا** (so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour). It means, 'Allah raised the People of Kahf after having kept them asleep for a long time so that others realized that His promise to raise the dead on the Last Day of Qiyāmah was true, and that there was no doubt about the coming of the Qiyāmah.'

### **People differed after the death of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf**

As for the holiness of the People of Kahf, everyone agreed about that and thought of making a memorial for them close to the Cave. However, there was a difference of opinion on the nature of the building. Some reports tell us that idol-worshippers, still left in the city, also used to visit the site. They proposed that it should be a public welfare building. But, the king and the official in his government were believers who played a dominant role in public affairs. They proposed that they should make a mosque over there so that it serves as a memorial to them and also becomes the cause of saving people from idol-worship in the future. At this place in the Qur'ān, the reference to this difference of opinion is hemmed in by the sentence: **رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ** (Their Lord knows them best).

Regarding the meaning of this sentence, Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ has mentioned two probabilities. (1) This was said by the same people from the city present there, because when a memorial was proposed after their death, people thought of inscribing a tablet mentioning the names and the details about the people of the Cave for the memory of whom the building was to be dedicated. And so they started talking variously



about the background details concerning the People of Kahf. In the end, when their differences remained unresolved, they said: رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ (their Lord knows them best). After saying that, they turned to the main job at hand which was raising a building in their memory. Those who were dominant decided to make a mosque. (2) Then, the probability that this was said by Allah Ta'ālā also exists here as it warns people who indulged in mutual disputations around baseless issues during that time. They are being told here that they do not know the reality and they do not have the sources to arrive at that knowledge. Why, then, would they waste their precious time in futile argumentation? Then, it is also possible that the warning was beamed at Jews and others who used the crutch of this event to indulge in baseless debates during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Pure and High is Allah who knows best.

### Ruling

This event tells us that making a *masjid* for Ṣalāh near the graves of men of Allah is no sin. As for the Ḥadīth in which words of curse have appeared against those who make the graves of prophets a *masjid*, it means making the graves as such a place of *sajdah* or prostration - which is, by consensus, *Shirk*, and *Ḥarām*. (Mazḥarī)

### Verse 22

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِعَدَّتِهِمْ مَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ۚ فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا ۚ وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

Some will say, "Three, the fourth of them being their dog," and some will say, "Five, the sixth of them being their dog, just making conjectures." And others will say, "Seven, the eighth of them is their dog." Say, "My Lord knows best about their number." No one knows them except a few, so do not argue about them except an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them. [22]

### Commentary

The verse opens with the word: سَيَقُولُونَ (*sayaqūlūn*: Some will say).

Who are these people who will say? There are two probabilities therein. (1) They could be the people who had differed among themselves during the time of the People of Kahf about their name and lineage, already mentioned in the previous verse. Out of these very people, some had made the first statement, some others, the second and still others, the third. (Mentioned in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from al-Māwardī)

(2) The second probability is that the pronoun in '*sayaqūlūn*' could be reverting back to the Christians of Najrān who had argued with the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the number of the People of Kahf. They had three sects among them. One sect was called Malkānīyah. They made the first statement about the number, that is, gave the number as three. The second sect was Ya'qūbiyah. They went by the second statement, that is, they were five. The third sect was Naṣṭūriyah. They made the third statement, saying that they were seven. However, some said that this third statement was that of Muslims. What finally happened was that the third statement turned out to be true as it appears from the hint given by the Qur'ān \*, and the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The use of the conjunction *wāw*:(and) in: *وَأَتَيْنَهُمُ* (*wā thāminuhum*: and the eighth of them) is worth noticing here. At this place, three statements have been reported about the number of the People of Kahf - three, five and seven - and after each, their dog has been counted. But, no conjunction '*wāw*' has been introduced in between their number and the count of the dog in the first two statements. The sentence: *ثَلَاثَةً رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ* (Three, the fourth of them being their dog) and the sentence: *خَمْسَةً سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ* (Five, the sixth of them being their dog) appear without that conjunction '*wāw*.' But, the arrangement is different in the third statement. Here, the word: *سَبْعَةً* (Seven) is followed by a connective '*wāw*' attached to the text of: *وَأَتَيْنَهُمُ كَلْبُهُمْ* (and the eighth of them is their dog).

Giving its reason, commentators say that early Arabs used to count up to seven digits, after which the number that followed was counted as separate, similar to its present counterpart, the number 9 where units end and the tens begin. Therefore, while counting from three to seven,

\*. The hint is that the former two views about their number have been termed by the Qur'ān as 'conjectures' while the third view has appeared without such a comment. (Muḥammad Taqī Usmani)

they would not use the connective '*wāw*.' To give a number after seven, they would state it separately with the help of a connective '*wāw*' - and for this reason, this '*wāw*' (and) was called the '*wāw*' (and) of '*thamān*' (eight). (Maẓharī and others)

### The names of the People of Kahf

The fact of the matter is that the names of the People of Kahf do not stand proved authentically from any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth. Names given in exegetical and historical reports differ. The closest out of these is the report given on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه by al-Ṭabarānī in al-Mu'jīm al-Ausaṭ with sound chains of narrators. The names given there are:

Muksalmina مُكْسَلِمِينَا

Tamlīkhā تَمْلِيخَا

Martunis مَرْطُونِسْ

Sanunis سَنُونِسْ

Sarinunis سَارِينُونِسْ

Dhu Niwas ذُونُوَاسْ

Ka'astitiunis كَعَسْطَطِيُونِسْ

### Basic rule in debatable matters: Avoid long-drawn argumentation

Referring to the animated efforts to determine the number of the People of Kahf, and other matters, the text says: فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (So do not argue about them except [with] an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them). The rule of conduct, a golden legacy of the Qur'ān, taught in these two sentences to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are, in fact, significant guiding principles for the learned among the Muslim community. The thing to do when difference arises on any issue is to state what is necessary clearly. If people, even after that, elect to pursue a course of unnecessary debate, one should offer cursory comments in the light of the earlier presentation and conclude the debate. Any effort to dig deeper to affirm one's claim or to make the extra effort to refute the assertion of debaters should be avoided - for nothing good would really come out of it. Moreover, any further prolongation of the debate and altercation would result in uncalled for waste of time as well as pose the danger of mutual bickering.

The second line of guidance given in the other sentence is that the optimum information given to him through Divine revelation about the People of Kahf should be taken as perfectly sufficient and satisfactory for all practical purposes. Let him not worry about finding more and asking others. As for asking others, it could have another aspect too. May be, the question asked is to expose their ignorance or to disgrace them. This too would be contrary to the high morals prophets have. Therefore, restraint was placed on asking both kinds of questions, either for additional investigation, or to prove the addressee ignorant and disgrace him.

### Verses 23 - 26

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَايٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ  
وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَٰذَا  
رَشَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا ﴿٢٥﴾  
قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا ۚ لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ أَبْصِرْ بِهِ  
وَأَسْمِعْ ۖ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ ۚ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾

And never say about anything, "I am going to do this tomorrow," [23] unless (you say - 'if) Allah wills.' And remember your Lord if you forget, and say, "I hope my Lord will lead me to what is closer, than this, in guidance." [24]

And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine. [25]

Say, "Allah knows best how long they stayed. To Him belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth - how well He sees and how well He hears! They have no supporter other than Him and He lets no one share His authority."

[26]

### Commentary

The story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf is due to end on the four verses cited above. In the first two of these, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Ummah has been taught to say 'Insha'Allah Ta'ālā' along with the promise or affirmation of doing something in the future. Because, who knows if one does or

does not live, and even if one does, will one be able to do or not to do that? Therefore, a believer should be confident about it in his or her heart, and confess to it verbally as well that in the event of making a commitment to do something next day, what will be said will be: 'If Allah Ta'ālā wills, I shall do this thing tomorrow.' This is what the saying of Insha'Allah means.

In the third verse (25), a decision has been given on a controversy. This was a debate in which people had held different opinions during the time of the People of Kahf, and equally different were the sayings of the Jews and Christians of the contemporary period about it, that is, the period of time they kept sleeping in the Cave. It was stated in the verse that those were three hundred and nine years. This is, so to say, a clarification of the statement made briefly at the beginning of the story: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ اٰذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكُهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا (So We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep] in the Cave for a number of years - 11).

After that, those who still differ with it have been warned once again that they are not the ones who know the reality of things as they are. The One who knows it all is none else but Allah with whom rests the knowledge of all that is unseen in the heavens and the earth. He is All Hearing. He is All Seeing. The time duration of three hundred nine years given by Him should be enough for their satisfaction.

### **Saying 'Insha'Allah' on doing something in the future**

The background of the revelation of the first two verses has been reported in Lubāb from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ in the following manner. When the people of Makkah acting as coached by the Jews, asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf etc., he promised to answer that next day without having said Insha'Allah. The least shortcoming issuing forth from the close ones brings some or the other notice of caution. Therefore, no revelation came for the next fifteen days. Naturally, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was grieved and the Mushriks of Makkah had their opportunity to laugh and ridicule. After this interval of fifteen days, when the answer to the questions asked was revealed, these two verses were revealed along with it as a measure of guidance. They told him that, should he need to say something about what he was going to do the next day, he should invariably affirm it by saying Insha'Allah, for everything depends on the intention and will of

Allah Ta'ālā. These two verses, it will be noted, have been introduced at the end of the story of the People of Kahf.

### Ruling

Firstly, these two verses (23,24) tell us that saying Insha'Allah in the given situation is *mustaḥabb* (recommended). Secondly, they tell us that, should this part of the statement be left unsaid inadvertently, then, one may say it at the time one remembers. This injunction relates to the particular matter for which these verses have been revealed. It means that the purpose is simply to say this word to invoke Divine blessing and to confess to one's servitude and not to make the statement contingent or conditional. Therefore, it does not follow from here that one would do the same in buying and selling transactions and contracts where conditions are imposed and on this rests the contract between parties. Is it possible to impose a condition whenever one remembers later in case one had forgotten to include the condition at the time of signing the original contract? The difference of some jurists exists in this issue details of which appear in books of Fiqh.

As for the period of sleep in the Cave given as three hundred nine years in the third verse (27), this statement concerning the time duration, as evident from the sequential arrangement of the Qur'ān, is but from Allah Ta'ālā. Ibn Kathīr has declared this to be the position of the majority of commentators, earlier and later. Abū Ḥayyān and al-Qurṭubī have also adopted this view. But, they have also reported another saying from Qatādah and others. It holds that this statement of three hundred nine years is also the saying of some of those who had differed and that the saying of Allah was what was said later: *اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا* (Allah knows best how long they stayed - 26). The reason is, had the earlier statement giving the duration as three hundred nine years been the word of Allah, there would have been no occasion for saying: *اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوا* (Allah knows best how long they stayed) after that. But, the majority of commentators have said that both these sentences are the word of Allah. The first one describes reality as it is. The second one warns those who differ with it. They have been told that once the statement giving the duration has come from Allah, accepting it is mandatory. Since He is the One who really knows, trying to differ with Him on the basis of mere conjectures and opinions is (to make an understatement) unreasonable.

The question that arises here is about the manner in which the Holy Qur'an has described the duration of stay. First it mentions three hundred years. After that, it has said that added to those three hundred there are nine. The number three hundred nine was not given initially. According to commentators, there is a reason for it. Since the Jews and Christians followed the Solar Calendar, their count remained three hundred years. And since Islam goes by the Lunar Calendar in which three more years are added every hundred years, therefore, three hundred years of Solar Calendar become nine more years in accordance with the Lunar Calendar. It was to tell the difference between the two years that this expressive diction was employed.

Yet another question arises here about the People of Kahf. During their time and then within the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Jews and Christians had their differences about two things - the number of the People of Kahf and the duration of their sleep in the Cave. The Qur'an does describe both. However, it has done so with a difference. The number was not mentioned explicitly. Rather, only a hint has been given by not refuting the view which was correct. But, the fixed duration was declared in very clear words: *وَكَبُتُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا* (And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine -25). The reason is that this very remarkable diction of the Qur'an strongly suggests that this debate on the number of the people of Kahf is virtually useless. No worldly or religious issue relates to or depends on it. Yes, this unusual sleep for such a long period of time, being healthy and fit without food and drink and then sitting up in good shape after such a long time is certainly a working model of Resurrection. That there is a Day of Judgement and that there is a Hereafter can be argued on this basis. Therefore, the period of sleep was stated very clearly.

People who deny the extraordinary miracles, or people who are in the habit of explaining them away overawed by the objections of modern day Jewish and Christian orientalists, have not spared even the Qur'an. For example, in the case of this verse (25), they have tried to use the explanation of Qatādah as a prop to reject the duration of three hundred nine years as the saying of those very people who were differing among themselves. But, they have erred. The statement: *سِتِينَ عَدَدًا* (for a number of years - 11) which appears in an earlier sentence of the Qur'an cannot be

called the saying of anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā! To prove the miraculous nature of the event even this much is sufficient that someone remains asleep for years and years and then rises and sits up all intact, fit and alive. Allah knows best.

### Verses 27 - 31

وَأَتْلُ مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَکَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدْوَةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ، وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنُکَ عَنْهُمْ ۚ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَا تُطِيعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ، عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّکُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ ۚ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا ۚ لَا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا ۚ وَإِنْ يَسْتَغِيثُوا يُغَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ ۚ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ ۚ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ﴿٣٠﴾ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِّنْ سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَكِينِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ۚ نِعَمَ الثَّوَابِ ۚ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٣١﴾

And recite what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no one to change His words and you will never find a refuge beside Him. [27]

And keep yourself content with those who call their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and let not your eyes overlook them seeking the splendor of the worldly life. And do not obey the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, and who has followed his desire and whose behavior has exceeded the limits. [28]



And say, "The truth is from your Lord. Now, whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny." Surely, We have prepared for the unjust a fire, whose tent envelops them. And if they beg for help, they shall be helped with water like oily dregs scalding the faces. And vile is the drink and evil is the Fire as a resting-place. [29] As for those who believe and do righteous deeds - of course, We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds. [30] Those are the ones for whom there are eternal gardens the rivers flowing beneath them. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will be dressed in green garments made of fine silk and thick silk, reclining therein on couches. Excellent is the reward and beautiful is the Garden as a resting- place. [31]

### Commentary

#### Da'wah and Tablīgh admit of no discrimination

Some events have been mentioned in the background of the revelation of the verse: **وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ** (And keep yourself content - 28). It is possible that all of them became the cause of this instruction. Al-Baghawī reports that 'Uyainah ibn Ḥiṣn al-Fazārī, the chief of Makkah paid a visit to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sitting there with him was Sayyidnā Salman al-Farisi رضي الله عنه who was one of the poor Ṣaḥābah. His dress was tattered and his looks, that of a *derwish*. Then, there were some other poor and humble people like him sitting within the gathering. 'Uyainah said, 'these are the people who stop us from coming to you and listening to you. We cannot sit with such broken-down people. You should remove them from your gathering, or you should, at the least, have one separate gathering for us and another, for them.'

Ibn Marduwayh reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that Umaiyah ibn Khalaf al-jumāhī advised the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should not have poor and broken-down Muslims as those close to him. Instead of that, he should prefer to have the chiefs of Makkah and the Quraysh tribe with him. If these people embraced the religion brought by him, it will advance the cause of religion.

Pursuant to events of this nature, came the Divine instruction that firmly stopped him from accepting their advice. Not only that he should not remove them from his company, in fact, the command given reads: **وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ** (*waṣbir nafsak*: translated as 'and keep yourself content'). If

translated literally, it could mean 'keep yourself tied with them,' not in the sense of not leaving them anytime, but meaning that he should attend to and relate to these very people, seeking their advice in essential matters and working in association with them alone. Why should he do that and what was the wisdom behind it? The words that follow spell the reason out. They call their Lord morning and evening, remembering Him under all conditions. And what they do is exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah. All these conditions around them are conditions that attract the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. And such are the people to whom comes the help of Allah. So, let them not worry about the loss of worldly support for the final victory shall be theirs.

The reason why he was prevented from accepting the advice of the Quraysh chiefs has been given towards the end of the verse. It was said that their hearts were heedless of the remembrance of Allah, everything they did was subservient to their physical desires and these conditions guaranteed that they would stand alienated far from the mercy and support of Allah Ta'ālā.

At this point, someone may doubt that this advice was reasonably practicable. A separate gathering for them would have not hurt. In fact, it would have made it easier to convey the message of Islam to them and equally easier for them to accept it. But, the creation of such a division would have amounted to seating the rebellious rich on a pedestal of honor, an action that could have broken the hearts of poor Muslims or dampened their courage. Allah Ta'ālā, in His ultimate wisdom, would not put up with anything like this. Instead of that, the ground rule of Da'wah and Tablīgh given by Him was that there should be no discrimination or distinction against or for anyone in it. Allah knows best.

### Ornaments for the People of Jannah

It has been mentioned in verse 31: يُحَلَوْنَ فِيهَا (They will be adorned therein) that men inmates of Jannah will also be adorned with bracelets of gold. The question it may bring up is that wearing ornaments is neither becoming for men, nor can these be called beauty and embellishment in any relative sense. If bracelets were put on them in Jannah, may be they make them look awful.

The answer is that embellishment and beauty are subservient to

practice or custom as recognized in a society. What is considered to be embellishment and beauty in one country or region could more than often be detested in other countries and regions. And this could be the other way round as well. Similarly, something is taken to be an embellishment in a given period of time. Comes another time and it becomes a blemish. When ornaments and silk dresses will come to be established as embellishment and beauty for men of Jannah too, no one is going to feel strange with it there. That which puts restraints on us here is a law of this world which stipulates that it is not permissible for men to wear any ornament of gold, even a ring or chain for watch made of gold. Similarly, silk clothes are not permissible for men. This will not be the law of Jannah. That is a universe of existence separate from this entire universe of our experience. It cannot be imagined on the analogy of anything in and around us on this basis alone.

### Verses 32 - 44

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ  
وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زُرْعًا ﴿٣٢﴾ كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ  
أَكْلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۖ وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلَالَهُمَا نَهْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَكَانَ لَهُ  
تَمْرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا ﴿٣٤﴾  
وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَن تَبِيدَ هَٰذِهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾  
وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً ۖ وَلَئِنْ رُدِدْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا  
مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ  
مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّكَ رَجُلًا ﴿٣٧﴾ لَكِنَّا هُوَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَلَا  
أُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۖ  
لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ تَرَنَّا أَقَلَّ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ﴿٣٩﴾ فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن  
يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتُصْبِحَ  
صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٤٠﴾ أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوَاهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ طَلَبًا ﴿٤١﴾

وَأَحِيطَ بِشَمْرِهِ فَاصْبَحَ يَقْلَبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ  
 عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا وَيَقُولُ يَلَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ  
 فِئَةٌ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنتَصِرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ هُنَالِكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلَّهِ  
 الْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ﴿٤٤﴾

And give them an example. There were two men; We gave one of them two gardens of grapes and We surrounded them both with date-palms and placed tillage between them. [32] Both the gardens brought forth their fruit and suppressed nothing from it and We caused a stream to flow through them. [33]

And he had wealth. So, he said to his companion while conversing with him, "I am greater than you in wealth and stronger in manpower." [34] And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will ever perish [35] and I do not think that the Hour is to come. And even if I am sent back to my Lord, I will surely find a better place than this to return to." [36] Said his companion as he was conversing with him, "Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a drop, then He fashioned you into a man? [37] As for me, I believe the fact that Allah is my Lord and I do not associate anyone with my Lord. [38] And why, when you entered your garden, did you not say, '(Everything is) as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah'? If you see me less than you in wealth and children, [39] then, I hope my Lord will give me (what is) better than your garden and send to yours a punishment from the heavens and it becomes a barren land." [40] Or, its water becomes deep-sunk so that you will never be able to search it out. [41] And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides and he stood wringing his hands (in anguish) over what he had invested therein while it was fallen down on its trellises and he was saying, "I wish I had not ascribed any partner to my Lord!" [42] And there were no supporters who could come to his help, other than Allah, nor was he able to help himself. [43] Here is that the power of protection rests with Allah - The True One. He is the best in rewarding and best in requiting. [44]

## Commentary

The word: ثَمَرٌ (*thamar*) in: وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ (And he had wealth - 34) means the fruit of trees as well as wealth, in an absolute sense. At this place, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and Qatādah have taken it in the later sense (Ibn Kathīr) According to the Lexicon, al-Qāmūs, this word is used to denote the fruit of the tree and wealth of all kinds. This tells us that not only did he own gardens and farms, he also had gold, silver and other luxuries. Even his words reported by the Qur'an: أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا (I am greater than you in wealth -34) also express the same sense. (Ibn Kathīr)

About the statement: مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ : "[Everything is] as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah," it has been reported in Shu'ab al-Īmān on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "whoever sees something, likes it - and says '*masha'Al-lahu la quwwata illa bil-lah*' - nothing will harm it (that is, what he likes will stay protected)." And it appears in other reports, 'whoever recites this *kalimah* when he likes something he sees, it will stay protected against the evil eye.'

## The gist of the arguments of these two persons, as explained by Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavi in Khulāṣa-e-Tafsīr

These verses have described the event of two persons one of whom had a lot of wealth and, proud of it, he refused to accept that there is any life after death, and if there is one, he claimed, he will be given more wealth and reward therein. His argument was that if Allah was not pleased with him, he would not have this amount of wealth in this world.

The other person, though less than him in wealth, was a true believer. He refuted the argument of the former one by saying that the worldly wealth is not a sign of one's being close to Allah, because the worldly benefits are given by Allah, in one way or the other, even to the disbelievers and sinful persons, rather to the snakes, scorpions and beasts. It is a horrible mistake to presume that they are the signs of one's being approved by Allah. Therefore, neither your wealth is the proof of your behaviour being approved by Allah, nor my lesser wealth is a proof of disapproval by Him. Allah's approval or disapproval depends on one's faith and deeds alone and not on the amount of wealth one has.

The word: حُسْبَانًا (*ḥusbāna*) in verse 40 has been explained by Qatādah as 'punishment' in an absolute sense, by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as 'fire' and by some as 'stoning.' As for what appears after that in the Qur'ān: أُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِ (And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides - 42), it obviously means that some major calamity hit his gardens, wealth and things of luxury reducing everything to ruins. The Qur'ān does not mention any particular calamity explicitly. It appears that, some fire came down from the skies and burnt the whole thing - as it appears in the Taf-sīr of 'ḥusbān' by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās who has explained it as 'fire.' And Allah knows best.

### Verses 45 - 49

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلِ الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا أَتْرَكْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ  
نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيحُ ۖ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ  
شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ أَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَالْبَقِيَّةُ  
الصَّالِحَةُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ تَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ نُسِيرُ الْجِبَالَ  
وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۖ وَحَشَرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٤٧﴾  
وَعَرَضُوا عَلَى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا ۖ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ  
بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَلَّنْ نَجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَوْعِدًا ﴿٤٨﴾ وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى  
الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يُوَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ  
لَا يَغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا ۚ وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا ۚ  
وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

And give them the example of the worldly life; it is like water We sent down from the sky, then mingled with it was the vegetation of the earth, and then it turned into chaff that the winds blow about. And Allah has power over everything. [45] Wealth and children are the embellishment of the worldly life and the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord in respect of reward and better to hope for. [46]

And (visualize) the Day We shall make mountains move and you see the earth exposed and We shall gather them together so as not to leave a single one of them. [47] And they shall be presented lined-up, before your Lord. Lo! You have come to Us just as We had created you at first. Instead, you claimed that We will not have for you an appointed time. [48] And placed there would be the book (of record), then you will see the guilty scared of what is therein and saying, "Woe to us! What a book is this! It has missed nothing, minor or major, but has taken into account. And they will find what they did all there. And your Lord will not wrong anyone. [49]

### Commentary

#### The meaning of 'everlasting virtues' ('*al-bāqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt*'- 34)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Accumulate 'everlasting virtues' as much as you can." It was said, "What are they?" He said, "Saying: *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ* (Pure is Allah. There is no god but Allah. All praise belongs to Allah. Allah is great and there is no power and no strength except with Allah). Ḥākim has called this Ḥadīth - Ṣaḥīḥ. And al-Uqaili reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ* (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great): These are the 'everlasting virtues.'" The same has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī from Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah رضي الله عنه. And the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Tirmidhī have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I like saying: *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ* (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great) better than everything under the Sun."

Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه said, "Recite: *لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ* (*lā haula wa lā quwwata illā bil-lāh*: There is no power and there is no strength except with Allah) a lot, because it removes ninety nine types of ailments out of which anxiety is the least painful."

Thus, according to the Tafsīr of 'everlasting virtues' in this verse by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'Ikrimah and Mujāhid, it means the very recitation of these words. And Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, Masrūq and Ibrāhīm said that 'everlasting virtues' denote five daily prayers.

And there is another report from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه which says that '*al-baqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt*' or 'everlasting virtues' in this verse means righteous deeds in a general sense. Included therein are the words mentioned above, and the five prayers, and all other righteous deeds as well. This explanation has also been reported from early commentator Qatādah. (Maḥzarī)

This also happens to be the drive of the meaning in terms of the words of the Qur’ān for these words literally convey the sense of the righteous deeds that are to keep surviving. And it is obvious that all deeds that qualify as righteous and sincere are abiding and everlasting in the sight of Allah. Ibn Jarīr and al-Qurṭubī have preferred this particular Tafsīr.

Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said, 'Cultivation is of two kinds. Wealth and children are the cash crops of the mortal world while 'everlasting virtues' are the deferred crops of the Hereafter.' Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Everlasting virtues are one's intention as the acceptance of righteous deeds depends on it.'

‘Ubaid ibn ‘Umair رضي الله عنه said, 'Everlasting virtues are righteous daughters for they are, for their parents, the greatest treasure-troves of reward from Allah.' This is supported by a narration of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "I saw a man from my *ummah* under orders to be taken to Hell. Thereupon, his righteous daughters clung to him and started wailing and crying and plaintively supplicating: O Allah, spare him for he was very kind to us in the mortal world and he worked very hard to raise us in our family. Allah Ta‘ālā, in His mercy, forgave him. (Qurṭubī)

### Visualize the Day of Resurrection

The address to everyone on that fateful Day of Qiyāmah shall be: لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ (Lo! You have come to Us [empty-handed, without any of those things you proudly possessed] just as We had created you at first - 47). Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī report on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once gave a Khuṭbah in which he said, "O people! On the Day of Qiyāmah, you will come walking bare-footed, bare-bodied, before your Lord and the one to be donned



with a dress first shall be Ibrāhīm, peace be on him." Hearing this, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها asked, 'Yā Rasūlallāh, is it that all men and women shall be naked, and seeing each other?' He said, "That day, everyone will be gripped by such preoccupation and anxiety that no one will have any occasion to cast a look towards any one - all eyes shall be raised upwards."

According to al-Qurṭubī, the statement appearing in a Ḥadīth that the dead will meet each other in Barzakh dressed in their shrouds is not contradictory of this Ḥadīth, because that is the case of Grave and Barzakh (post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) while the present one concerns the plains of Resurrection. And there are some Ḥadīth reports to the effect that the deceased person will rise on the Day of Resurrection in the dress he or she was buried. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه said, 'Give good *kafn* (shroud) to the deceased among you because they will rise on the Last Day dressed in these.' Some commentators have interpreted the report as relating to Shahīds (martyrs who are buried in their dress). Then, there are others who have said that it is possible that some people rise dressed on the Day of Resurrection and some others, without it. In this way, both kinds of reports conjoin. (Maḥzarī)

### **Recompense (*al-jazā'*) is the Deed (*al-'amal*) itself**

Towards the end of verse 49, it was said: وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا (And they will find what they did all there). Commentators generally explain its sense by saying that they will find the recompense of their deeds present there. My respected teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, used to say that there is no need for this interpretation here. Countless Ḥadīth narratives prove that these very deeds of the mortal world will become the recompense - reward or punishment - of the Hereafter. Their forms will transform there. Righteous deeds will transform into the blessings of Paradise and evil deeds will turn into the Hell-fire, snakes and scorpions.

It appears in Aḥādīth that the wealth of those who do not pay Zakāh will come to them in the grave in the form of a big snake. The thing will bite them saying, أَنَا مَالُكَ (*anā māluk*: I am your wealth). The righteous deed, transformed into an elegant human visitor will come to mollify one's terrible loneliness in the grave. Sacrificial animals will provide the ride over the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ. Sins committed will be placed on top of

everyone's heads as their burdensome wherewithal on the Day of Resurrection.

About devouring what belongs to the orphans by unfair means, it was said in the Qur'an: *إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا* (they only eat fire into their bellies - 4:10). All such Qur'anic verses and Ḥadīth narratives are generally interpreted as figures of speech. But, in the light of the view given above, none of these need a figure of speech to explain. Everything stays intrinsically real, as is.

The Qur'an has equated the unlawful consumption of an orphan's property with fire. So, the reality is that it is nothing but fire even at that time. But, in order to experience its effect, the condition is that one must pass away from this mortal world. It is like someone calling a matchbox by the name of fire, which is correct. But, in order that it becomes fire, it remains subject to the condition of friction. Similarly, if someone says that petrol or gas is fire, he would be considered as right - though, it would actually materialize only when the condition of being touched by a tiny flame of fire is fulfilled.

The outcome is that one's deed - whatever good or bad one does in the moral world - will take the form of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. That will be a time when its marks of identification will become different from that of the mortal world and take a form of its own. And Allah alone knows best.

### Verses 50 - 59

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ كَانَ مِنَ  
الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ ۖ أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِي ۖ وَهُمْ  
لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ بِئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا ﴿٥٠﴾ مَا أَشْهَدُتُّهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلَقَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا  
﴿٥١﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَاءِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ  
يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَوْبِقًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَرَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا

أَنَّهُمْ مُوَاعِعُوهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ﴿٤٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا  
 الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ط وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ﴿٥٠﴾  
 وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَى وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ  
 تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ﴿٥١﴾ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ  
 إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ح وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ  
 الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ  
 بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدُهُ ط إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى  
 قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ط وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى  
 فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٥٣﴾ وَرَبُّكَ الْعَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ط لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا  
 كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ط بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ  
 مَوْثَلًا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَى أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ  
 مَوْعِدًا ﴿٥٥﴾

And remember when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Adam." So, they prostrated themselves, all but Iblīs. He was of the Jinn, so he transgressed from the command of your Lord. Is it then that you will take him and his progeny as friends instead of Me while they are enemy to you? Evil is he as substitute, for wrongdoers. [50]

I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation. And I am not the one to take those who mislead as helpers. [51] And the Day He will say, "Call My 'partners' whom you took as such." So, they will call them but they will not respond to them and We will put a place of disaster between them. [52] And the sinners will see the Fire, so they will know that they are to fall into it and they will find no way to bypass it. [53]

And indeed We have explained in this Qur'ān every subject in various ways for the people. And man is most quarrelsome of all things. [54]

And nothing has prevented people from believing when guidance came to them, and from seeking forgiveness from their Lord but (their demand) that there should come to them what used to come to the earlier peoples or that the punishment should come to them face to face. [55]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warnings, and those who disbelieve raise disputes with the false (arguments) so that they may nullify the truth with it. And they have made My signs and the warnings given to them a mockery. [56]

And who is more unjust than the one who was reminded through the signs of his Lord but he turned away from them and forgot what his own hands sent ahead. And We have put covers on their hearts so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And should you call them to the right path, even then they will never ever take to guidance. [57]

And your Lord is the Most Forgiving, the Master of Mercy. If He seizes them for what they did, He would cause their punishment to come soon. But, for them, there is an appointed time from which they will never find a refuge. [58]

And these towns We destroyed when they transgressed and We made an appointed time for their destruction. [59]

## Commentary

### The progeny of Iblīs, and his descendants and followers

The word: *وَذُرِّيَّتِهِ* (*dhurriyyatah*) in verse 50 indicates that Iblīs (Shaiṭān, Satan) has offspring, and a host of descendants and followers. Some commentators have said that 'progeny' at this place means 'accomplices.' That the Shaiṭān has offspring from his loins is not necessary. But, there is a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth which Ḥumaidī has reported in *Kitāb al-Jam' bain al-Ṣaḥīḥain* on the authority of Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضي الله عنه. According to his narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him, "do not become like those who are the first to enter the bazaar (shopping centre), or those who are the last to leave it, for the bazaar is a place where the Shaiṭān has his eggs and offspring laid around." This would indicate that the progeny of Shaiṭān spreads out in that manner - through what is laid and hatched by him. After having presented this report, al-Qurṭu

bī has said that the Shaitān has accomplices and armies is something established by conclusive proofs - and as for the Shaitān having offspring, a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth has appeared above. Allah knows best.

The statement: وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا (And man is the most quarrelsome of all things - 54) has been testified through a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Anas رضي الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyyamah, a man from among the disbelievers will be brought forth. He will be asked, 'what was your response to the messenger We had sent to you?' He will say, 'O my Lord, as for me, I did believe in You and in Your messenger too and that I obeyed him in everything I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'here is your book of deeds before you. All this you say is not there.' This man will say, 'I do not believe in this book of deeds.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'what about these angels of Ours? They used to watch you. They bear witness against you.' This man will say, 'I do not accept their testimony as well, nor do I know them, nor have I seen them while I was doing what I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'if so, this Preserved Tablet (اللوح المحفوظ) is before you. Written here too is the same thing about you.' He will say, 'my Lord, have You granted me asylum from injustice or have you not?' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'Of course, you have your refuge against injustice with Us.' So then, he will say, 'O my Lord, how can I accept the verdict of those unseen witnesses I am not familiar with at all? As for me, I can only accept a witness that comes from my own person.' At that time, his mouth will be sealed, and his hands and feet will bear witness against his *kufr* and *shirk*. After that, he will be released and thrown into the Hell. (The subject matter of this narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, also from Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه - al-Qurtubī)

### Verses 60 - 70

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّى أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ  
حُقُبًا ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي  
الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا ﴿٦١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتَاهُ إِنِّي غَدَاءٌ نَا لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ  
سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ

الْحَوْتَ وَمَا أُنْسِيَهُ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ ۚ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي  
 الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ ۖ فَارْتَدَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا  
 ﴿٦٤﴾ فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِمَّا لَدُنَّا  
 عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَ مِنَّا عِلْمًا  
 رُّشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ  
 مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾ قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنِ شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا  
 أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ  
 أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And when Mūsā said to his young man, "I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years. [60] So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel. [61] When they went further, he said to his young man, "Bring us our morning meal; we have, indeed, had much fatigue from this journey of ours." [62] He said, "You see, when we stayed at the rock, I forgot the fish. It was none but Satan who made me forget it to tell you about it - and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea." [63] He said, "That was what we were looking for." So they returned, retracing their footsteps. [64] Then they found one of Our servants whom We blessed with mercy from Us and whom We gave knowledge, a knowledge from Our own. [65] Mūsā said to him, "May I follow you on (the undertaking) that you teach me a bit of right knowledge you have been given." [66] He said, "You can never afford to keep patient while with me. [67] And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp?" [68] He (Mūsā) said, "You will find me patient, if Allah wills, and I shall not disobey any order from you." [69] He said, "Well, if you follow me, do not ask me about anything unless I, on my own initiative, tell you about it." [70]

### Commentary

وَأَذْكَأَ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِفَتَاهُ (And

when Mūsā said to his young man), the opening sentence of verse 60, 'Mūsā' means the famous prophet, Mūsā son of 'Imrān عليه السلام. The attribution of this event to some other Mūsā by Nawf al-Bakālī has been sternly refuted by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī.

As for the word: فتي (*fatā*), it literally means a young man. When this word is used as attributed to a particular person, it carries the sense of his attendant or servant because it is usually a young and strong man who is taken in for this kind of service in order that he could handle all sorts of jobs. Incidentally, it also happens to be an article of good Islamic etiquette that a servant or attendant should be addressed nicely, either by his name, or an appellation such as 'young man.' The ground rule is that even servants are not to be addressed as servants. At this place, the attribution of '*fatā*' is to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, it means Sayyidnā Mūsā's attendant in service. It appears in Ḥadīth narratives that the name of this attendant was Yūsha' son of Nūn, son of Ifrā'īm, son of Yūsuf عليه السلام. Some narratives identify him as the maternal nephew of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. But, no categorical decision can be taken in this matter. As for his name being Yūsha' ibn Nūn, that much stands proved on the authority of sound narratives. However, there is no proof for the rest of the antecedents. (Qurṭubī)

The word: مَجْمَعُ الْبَحْرَيْنِ (*majma' al-baḥrayn*) literally means every such place where two waters meet - and it is obvious that they are many all around the world. Exactly which place is meant by '*majma' al-baḥrayn*' in this context? Since the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not pinpointed it precisely, therefore, sayings of commentators differ in terms of traces and contexts. According to Qatādah, it signifies the meeting point of the seas of Fāris (Persia) and Rūm. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah has identified a place near Azerbaijan. Some point out to the confluence of the Gulf of 'Aqabah in Jordan and the Red Sea (Sharm ash-Shaykh). Some others have said that this place is located in Ṭanjah (Tangiers in North Africa). Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه reports that it is in Africa. Suddiyy gives its location in Armenia. Some give its location at the meeting point of the sea of Andulus (Gibraltar) and the Great Ocean (Atlantic). Allah knows best. However, this much is clear that Allah Ta'ālā had told Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام the fixed geographical location of this place towards which he had

made his journey. (Qurṭubī)

### The Story of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses) and Al-Khaḍir (Elias)

Details of this event appear in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. There, according to a narration of Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: "Once when Mūsā عليه السلام rose to address his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, those present there asked him, 'of all human beings, who is the foremost in knowledge?' Since (in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام there was no one more knowledgeable than himself) therefore, he said, 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' (Allah Ta'ālā has His special ways of grooming prophets close to Him, therefore, this statement was not welcome. The etiquette of the situation demanded that he should have resigned his answer to the ultimate knowledge of Allah and said that 'Allah alone knows as to who is the foremost in knowledge among His entire creation'). So, the answer given by Mūsā عليه السلام brought displeasure from Allah Ta'ālā and to him it was revealed: 'Present on the meeting point of the two seas, there is a servant of Ours. He is more knowledgeable than you.' (When Mūsā عليه السلام came to know this, he submitted before Allah Ta'ālā that it was incumbent on him to travel and learn from the person who is superior to him in knowledge). So, he said: 'O Allah, tell me where to find him.' Allah Ta'ālā said, 'put a fish in your basket and travel in the direction of the meeting point of the two seas. When you reach the place where this fish disappears, that shall be the place where you meet that servant of Ours.' As commanded, Mūsā عليه السلام put a fish in the basket and set out. His attendant, Yūsha' ibn Nūn was also with him. During the course of travel, they reached a rock where they lied down resting their heads against it. All of a sudden, on that spot, the fish moved, left the basket and went into the sea. (With this miracle of the fish coming alive and slipping out into the sea, yet another miracle unfolded when) Allah Ta'ālā stopped the flow of water currents all along the way the fish took into the sea making the place like a tunnel into the sea. (Yūsha' ibn Nūn witnessed this extraordinary event while Mūsā عليه السلام was asleep). When he woke up, Yūsha' ibn Nūn forgot to mention this strange happening before him and resumed their journey onwards from there. They traveled for a whole day and night. When came the morning of the next day, Mūsā عليه السلام asked his companion of the journey, 'bring us our morning meal. We have, indeed, had



much fatigue from this journey of ours.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that (as Divinely arranged) Mūsā عليه السلام felt no fatigue at all before that, so much so that he had over-traversed the spot where he had to reach. It was only when Mūsā عليه السلام asked for his morning meal that Yūsha' ibn Nūn recalled the fate of the fish, tendered his excuse for having forgotten to mention it for the Satan had made him forget about the need to report this matter to him earlier. After that, he disclosed that the dead fish had come alive and gone into the sea in an amazing manner. Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said: 'that was what we were looking for.' (That is, the place where the fish comes alive and disappears was the desired destination).

So they turned back that very instant and took the same route they had taken earlier in order to find the spot they were looking for. Now, when they reached the familiar rock, they saw that someone was lying there covered with a sheet from the head down to the feet. Mūsā عليه السلام (taking things as they were) offered the greeting of *salām*. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'where in the world does this '*salām*' come from in this (uninhabited) wilderness?' Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'I am Mūsā.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl?' He confirmed, 'Yes, I am Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl. I have come here to ask you to teach me the knowledge Allah has given to you specially.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'you will be unable to remain patient with me. O Mūsā, there is a knowledge Allah has given to me and which you do not have while there is a knowledge which Allah has given to you which I do not have.' Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'if Allah wills, you will find me patient. I shall not disobey you in any of your orders.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'If you are to be with me, do not ask me about anything unless I tell you about it first.'

After having said this, they started walking by the shore. Then came a boat. A ride was negotiated. The boat people recognized al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and let them come on board free of any charges. No sooner did he step into the boat, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام forced out a panel of the boat with the help of an axe. Mūsā عليه السلام could not restrain himself. He said, 'These people gave us a free ride on the boat. This is what you did to them in return. You tore their boat apart so that they would drown. You have really done something very bad.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'Did I not tell you before

that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Thereupon, Mūsā offered his excuse that he had forgotten his promise and requested him not to take him to task on his act of inadvertent omission.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ, after relating this event, said, "The first objection raised by Mūsā عليه السلام against al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was activated by forgetfulness, the second as a condition and the third by intention. (Meanwhile) a bird came, sat down on the side of the boat and took out a beak-full of water from the sea. Thereupon, addressing Mūsā عليه السلام, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, "even the combined knowledge of the two of us, yours and mine, cannot claim a status against Divine knowledge that could be compared even with the water in the beak of this bird as related to this sea."

Then, having disembarked from the boat, they started walking on the shore. All of a sudden, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام saw a boy playing with other boys. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام killed the boy with his own hands. The boy died. Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'you took an innocent life unjustly. Indeed, this was a grave sin you committed.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'Did I not tell you before that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Mūsā عليه السلام noticed that this matter was far more serious than the first one. Therefore, he said, 'if I question you after this, you will be free to remove me from your company. As far as I am concerned, you have reached the limit of excuses from me.'

After that, they started walking again until they passed by a village. They requested the village people to house them as guests. They refused. In this habitation, they noticed a wall that was about to collapse. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام made it stand straight with his own hands. Surprised, Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'we requested their hospitality. They refused. Now you did such a big job for them. If you wished, you could have charged wages from them to do it.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ' (It means that the condition now stands fulfilled, therefore, time has come for you and me to part company).

Then, after telling Mūsā عليه السلام the reality behind the three events, Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said: ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا which means: 'That was the reality of the events over which you were unable to remain patient.'

Once he had narrated this entire event, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I wish Mūsā عليه السلام could have remained more patient so that we would have come to know more about the two of them."

This lengthy Ḥadīth appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in a manner that it establishes three things. It clearly mentions the name of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl, the name of his young companion during the travel as Yūsha' ibn Nūn and the name of the 'servant of Allah' to whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was sent towards the meeting point of the two seas as Al-Khaḍir. Now, from this point onwards, we shall take up the verses of the Qur'ān, and explain their sense.

### Some rules of the road and a model of high prophetic determination

The first statement made in verse 60: لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا ("I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years") was from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as addressed to his traveling companion, Yūsha' ibn Nūn. The purpose was to inform him about the direction and destination of the intended journey. This too releases a refinement in manners for he was taking the necessary steps to orient his companion and attendant with the knowledge of things essential for the journey. Proud and arrogant people just do not regard servants and attendants worth addressing, nor would they pass on any information to them about a projected journey.

The word: حُقُبًا (*ḥuqubā*: years) is the plural of: حُقْبَةً (*ḥuqbah*). According to lexicographers, *ḥuqbah* is a period of eighty years. Some add more years to this definition. The truth of the matter is that *ḥuqbah* refers to a long period of time. There are no set limits about it. Here, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has told his companion on the trip that he has to reach a particular place at the meeting point of the two seas. There he must reach as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and that he was determined to continue his journey until he reaches that destination no matter how long the journey takes. When ready to obey the command of their Lord, this is a model of high determination exhibited by prophets.

### Precedence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام over Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, his upbringing and miracles

In the next verse, it was said:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا

So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel  
- 61.

Before we explain the nature of the extraordinary happening there, it is appropriate to first refer to the distinct position bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the comity of prophets. This has been mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an, and Sunnah. The special distinction of having conversed with Allah Ta'ālā is his hallmark. With al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, the matter is different. To begin with, the very fact of his being a prophet has been debated. Even if his prophet-hood (*nubuwwah*) is acknowledged, he does not hold the station of a messenger (Rasūl) of Allah. Neither is he credited with a Book, nor does he have a distinct community of followers. Therefore, considering all related aspects, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has marked precedence over al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. But, Allah Ta'ālā has His own wise ways to help those close to Him perform better. He would not let the least want or short coming go uncorrected and not amended. This process of reform at the highest level would even bring serious displeasure from Allah and it is through an equally serious measure that they are made to repair for it. This whole story reflects the same mode of personal training. By saying: اَنَا (anā: I), he had said: 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' Allah Ta'ālā did not like it. So, as a measure of warning, he was given the whereabouts of a servant who had a field of knowledge specially given to him by Allah. This Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not have. Though the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was far higher in rank than that given to him, but the truth of the matter was that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام just did not have it. On the other side, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with an intense desire to seek knowledge. As soon as he smelt the scent of knowledge elsewhere too, knowledge that he did not have, he was all set to go for it traveling like an ardent student and it was Allah Ta'ālā Himself that he turned to for the address of that servant of His (al-Khaḍir عليه السلام). Now, there is something worth pondering at this point. Had it been the will of Allah Ta'ālā that Mūsā عليه السلام should meet al-Khaḍir عليه السلام at that spot, He could have arranged that easily. Or, if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself was Divinely destined to travel, he could have been given a clear address to help him reach it without any botheration. But, what happened here was differ-

ent. The address given to him was far from being precise - 'when you reach the place where the dead fish stirs and disappears, that will be the place you will find Our servant.'

Just about what this Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī proves is that the command to put a fish in their basket came from Allah Ta'ālā. Beyond that, it is not known whether the order was to carry a fish for eating or that it was to be carried as separate from what was to be eaten. Both probabilities exist. Therefore, some of the commentators said that this grilled fish was put in to eat and, during the course of the journey, the two travelers kept eating out of it as well. Eaten thus was almost half of it. After that, miraculously enough, this grilled and half-eaten fish came alive and went into the sea.

Ibn 'Aṭiyyah and many others also observed that this fish kept surviving in the world as a matter of miracle and there were those who even saw that it had only one side intact while the other was eaten. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has also put his personal sighting on record. (Qurṭubī)

And there are other commentators who have said that the command was to put a fish in a basket separate from that for food. The fish was put as commanded. Here too, at least this much is definite that the fish was dead. Its stirring up, becoming alive and going into the sea was nothing but a miracle.

We have said a little earlier that the address of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was left imprecise in a manner that it would not remain easy to pinpoint it. Obviously, this too was nothing but a trial and test for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. As though this was not enough, the scenario of an additional test was activated for them when they had reached the exact spot but forgot the fish. In the verse of the Qur'ān, this act of forgetting has been attributed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his companion both: نَسِيََا حَوْثَهُمَا (they forgot their fish - 61). But, as regards the story proved from the Ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī, it seems to indicate that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was asleep when came the time for the fish to become alive and go into the sea. This extraordinary event was witnessed by Yūshā' ibn Nūn only and he had intended that he would relate it to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as soon as he woke up. But, soon after that happened, Allah Ta'ālā cast a state of oblivion on him and he forgot to do that. If so, the attribution of forgetfulness to both of them would be similar to the statement of the Qur'ān: يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا

اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ - 55:22. Here it has been said that pearl and coral are extracted from both sweet and brackish waters - although, these are collected from the later only. But, saying something like this in usage is common. Then it is also possible that since both respected elders had forgotten to take this fish along with them as far as the journey from that point onwards was concerned. Therefore, forgetfulness was attributed to both.

Nevertheless, this was yet another test. After having reached the projected destination, the fish came alive and disappeared into the sea. The reality had unfolded and the place was pinpointed. But, that was not the end. The seeker of truth had to undergo yet another test. Therefore, forgetfulness overtook both of them and it was only after having traveled one day and one night more that they realized hunger and fatigue. This was the third test, because any realization of fatigue and hunger should have naturally come earlier than that. If they had recalled the fish at that earlier time and place, they would have not suffered from such a long additional journey. But, such was the will of Allah Ta'ālā that they had to face a little more of hardship. It was only after having gone through the grind of such a long journey that they felt hungry and thirsty and there it was that they remembered the fish and found out that they had come far ahead of their desired destination. Therefore, they returned back on the same footprints they had left earlier.

The first mention of the fish going into the sea was made through the word: سَرَبًا (*sarabā* - 61). Sarab means a tunnel that is dug to open up a passage through the mountains or an underground subway in cities. This tells us that the fish when it went into the sea had a tunnel-like passage forming itself in whatever direction it moved. Water currents did not obstruct its passage at all, rather left it open - as made explicit by the narrative from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. The second time, when Yūshā' ibn Nūn related this event before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام after their long journey, it was done in the following words: وَأَتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا (and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea - 63). There is no contradiction between the two, because the incidence of a tunnel forming itself into the sea was by itself an extraordinarily amazing event.

### About al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and the issue of his prophet-hood

Though the name of the person concerned in this event has not been mentioned in the Qur'ān - in fact, he has been called: عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا (a ser-

vant from among Our servants - 65) - but, in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, his name has been given as: الْخَضِر (al-Khaḍir). Literally, it means green, verdant. Giving the reason for his name being al-Khaḍir, commentators at large say that grass would grow at the spot where he would sit, no matter what the nature of the land. It would just turn green. The Qur'ān has also not made it clear whether al-Khaḍir (عليه السلام) was some prophet, or was one of the men of Allah. But, in the sight of the majority of religious scholars, the proof of his being a prophet is embedded within the events mentioned in the Qur'ān. There is a reason for it. Some of the proved events during this journey that issued forth from al-Khaḍir (عليه السلام) are absolutely counter to the Sharī'ah and there can be no exemption from an injunction of the Sharī'ah except under the authority of a Divine revelation, something restricted to a prophet and messenger of Allah. A waliyy (man of Allah) could also come to know something either through Kashf (illumination) or Ilhām (inspiration). But, that is not an authority to prove a rule of Sharī'ah. No injunction of the externally codified Sharī'ah can be changed on that basis. Therefore, it stands established that al-Khaḍir (عليه السلام) was a prophet and messenger of Allah. Given to him were some of those particular injunctions, injunctions that were counter to the codified Sharī'ah. Whatever he did, he did under the authority of this excepted injunction. He himself has attested to that in the sentence of the Qur'ān saying: وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي (and I did not do it under my authority - 82) that is, did it under Divine authority.

In short, according to the majority of religious scholars of the Muslim community, al-Khaḍir (عليه السلام) too is a prophet and messenger. But, it was an imperative of creation that some duties were assigned to him from Allah. The knowledge given to him related to these very duties. Of this Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) had no information, therefore, he objected. This subject has been dealt with in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ of Abu Ḥayyān and in most commentaries variously.

### **It is not lawful for any waliyy or man of Allah to contravene the injunction of codified Sharī'ah**

Right from here we learn that there is no shortage of ignorant and misguided Ṣūfīs who give a bad name to Taṣawwuf. The likes of them would say that Sharī'ah is something else and Ṭarīqah is something else. There are many things taken as ḥarām in the Sharī'ah, but they

are permissible in the Ṭarīqah. Therefore, even if you see a *waliyy* (man of Allah) involved in a major sin openly and clearly, you cannot raise an objection against him! This is heresy, flagrant and false. No *waliyy*, no man of Allah anywhere in this world can be taken on the analogy of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, nor can any act contrary to the codified Shari'ah issuing forth from him be called permissible.

### Following the teacher is incumbent on the student

In verse 66: هَلْ أَتَبِعَكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَ مِمَّا عَلَّمْتُ رُشْدًا , Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, despite being a prophet and messenger of great resolve, has most reverentially requested al-Khaḍir عليه السلام if he could follow him to learn his knowledge from him. This tells us that the etiquette of acquiring knowledge is nothing but that the student should show respect for the teacher and follow him (as an individual who is eager to learn) - even if the student happens to be superior to his teacher. (Qurtubī, Maḥḥarī)

### It is not permissible for an 'Ālim' of the 'Shari'ah' to patiently bear what is contrary to the Shari'ah

By saying: إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا (You can never be able to keep patient while with me. And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp? - 67, 68), al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was telling Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about the fact and the reason why he would be unable to keep patient with him. He knew nothing about the reality of the thing. What he meant was that the nature of knowledge given to him was different from the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, things he did would appear to be objectionable in his sight, until he himself was to apprise him of their reality. Thus, the objections he would raise against such actions would be triggered by the dictates of his mission as a prophet.

Since Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was ordered to go to and learn from al-Khaḍir عليه السلام by none but Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, he was initially at peace with himself hoping that nothing he did would really be counter to the Shari'ah - though, he may not understand it externally. So, he promised to keep patient. Otherwise, the making of such a promise is not permissible for any 'Ālim of Dīn. But, later on, overtaken by his strong sense of honor relating to the Shari'ah, he forgot about this promise.

The first event was really not that serious. That the boat people



would suffer from financial loss or the boat may sink remained at the level of an impending danger only - which stood removed later on. But, in the case of the event that took place thereafter, Mūsā عليه السلام did not even make that promise of not objecting. In fact, when he saw the incident of a boy having been killed, he objected vehemently and did not offer any excuse whatsoever for his objection either. He simply said if he came up with an objection next time, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام would have the right of not keeping him in his company. The underlying logic was that no prophet and messenger of Allah can bear by seeing things being done against the norms of the Shari'ah and yet maintaining a stance of peevish patience. However, this was a unique situation. There were prophets on both sides. Therefore, the reality unfolded. It finally turned out that these fragmentary events were exempted for al-Khaḍir عليه السلام from the purview of the general rules of the Shari'ah. Whatever he did, he did only in accordance with the dictates of the Divine Wahy (revelation). (Mazhari)

### **Basic difference in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and al-Khaḍir عليه السلام: Resolution of an apparent dichotomy**

Naturally, a question arises here. We see that, according to the explanation of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, the nature of the knowledge given to him was different from that of the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Now, when both these two areas of knowledge were given by Allah Ta'ālā alone, why did this contradiction and difference show up in their two respective injunctions? Qādī Thanauḷlāh of Pānīpat has given a research-based answer to this question in his Tafsīr Mazhari. It is the closest to being right and appealing. Given below is a gist of what I understand from his presentation:

'The blessed souls Allah Ta'ālā honors with His revelation and prophet-hood are generally those who are entrusted with the mission of making people better. Sent to them is a Book and Shari'ah which offer principles and rules that serve as blueprints of guidance and betterment for the creation of Allah. Blessed prophets and messengers mentioned in the noble Qur'ān as such were all assigned with the mission of Law and Reform. To this related the Revelation they received. But then, there are services essential to the realm of creation (*takwīn*) as well. Generally, appointed to take care of these are the angels of Allah. However, Allah

Ta'ālā has specifically chosen some from among the group of prophets also in order to carry out the services of *takwīn* (whereby the decisions of Allah's will relating to the management of His creation are enforced). Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام belongs to this very group. These imperatives of *takwīn* relate to minor incidents and events, that a certain person should be saved from getting drowned, or someone should be killed, promoted or demoted or subdued. These matters do not relate to common people at all, nor are they addressed by these imperatives. In such events of minor consequences, one may confront some of those situations where killing a person is against the religious law. But, under the imperative of creation, that particular event has been exempted from the general religious law and the act has been made permissible for the person who has been appointed to carry out this imperative of *takwīn*. Under such conditions, the experts of religious law are not aware of this exempted injunction and are compelled to call it '*ḥarām*' (unlawful) and the person who has been exempted from this law under the imperative of *takwīn* remains in the right in his own place.

In short, wherever such a contradiction is perceived, it is no contradiction in the real sense. It is simply the exemption of some minor events from the general religious law. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abu Ḥayyān said:

الجمهور على ان الخضر نبى وكان علمه معرفة بواطن قد اوحيت اليه وعلم موسى  
الاحكام والفتيا بالظاهر

The majority holds Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام to be a prophet and his knowledge was the gnosis of (the inner dimensions of the human) self which was revealed to him and the knowledge of Mūsā عليه السلام was of the injunctions and rulings on the apparent. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, v. 6)

For the aforesaid reason, it is also necessary that this exemption should take effect through revelation to a prophet. The Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration) of some Waliyy (man of Allah) are never sufficient to make such an exemption effective. This is the reason why the act of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام in killing a boy apparently without a just reason was *ḥarām* (unlawful) in the sight of the Sharī'ah which rules on the apparent. But, as for al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, he was appointed to do that while exempted from this law as an imperative of creation (*takwīn*). Taking the Kashf and Ilhām of some non-prophet on the analogy of al-Khaḍir

ﷺ and thereby taking something *ḥarām* (unlawful) to be *ḥalāl* (lawful) - as popular among some ignorant Sufis - is totally anti-religion and certainly, a rebellion against Islam.

Ibn Abī Shaibah reports an event relating to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه by saying that Najdah Harūrī (a Kharijite) wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās and asked as to how did al-Khaḍir عليه السلام kill a minor boy when the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the killing of minors. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās answered his letter by saying, 'if you were to receive the same knowledge about some minor as was received by Sayyidnā Mūsā's 'man of knowledge' (that is, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام), the killing of a minor would become permissible for you too! What he meant was that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had received his knowledge about it only through revelation exclusive to a prophet. That nobody can have now because prophet-hood has ended. There is to be no prophet after the Last among Prophets, that is, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, who could have through revelation knowledge about some particular person to have been exempted under Divine command in the case of such events. (Maẓharī)

From this event too, the real thing becomes clear, that is, no one other than a revelation-receiving prophet has the right to declare anyone as exempted from any Islamic legal injunction.

### Verses 71 - 78

فَانْطَلَقَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا ۖ قَالَ أَخَرَقْتُهَا لِيَتَغَرَّقَ  
 أَهْلُهَا ۖ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا أَمْرًا ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ  
 صَبْرًا ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا  
 ﴿٧٣﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ ۖ قَالَ أَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً  
 بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ۖ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَّكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ  
 تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتِكِ عَنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا  
 تُصَحِّحْنِي ۚ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا ﴿٧٦﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا آتَيَا  
 أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ ۖ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلُهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُضَيِّقُوهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا

يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقُضَ فَاقَامَهُ، ط قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ  
هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ ۖ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

﴿٧٨﴾

So, they both moved ahead until when they boarded the boat, he broke it. He (Mūsā) said, "Did you break it that you drown its people? You have done something terrible indeed." [71] He said, "Did I not tell that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?" [72] He (Mūsā) said, "Do not hold me accountable for what I forgot. And do not burden me with something difficult in this matter of mine." [73]

So, they moved ahead until when they met a boy, he killed him (the boy). He (Mūsā) said, "Did you kill an innocent person in retaliation of nobody? You have done something abominable indeed." [74] He said, "Did I not tell you that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?" [75] He (Mūsā) said, "If I ask you about something after this, do not allow me your company. You have now reached a point where you have a valid excuse from my own side (to do so)." [76]

Then, they moved ahead until they came to the people of a town; they asked its people for food and they refused to host them. Then, they found there a wall tending to fall. So he set it right. He (Mūsā) said, "Had you wished, you could have charged a fee for it." [77] He said, "Here is the point of parting ways between me and you. I shall now explain to you the reality of things about which you could not remain patient. [78]

### Commentary

It was said in verse 71: أَخْرَجْنَاهَا لَئِئَلَّا تُفْرَقَ أَهْلُهَا (Did you break it that you drown its people?). About it, it appears in the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had dislodged a plank of the boat with an axe because of which there was a danger that water would fill up the boat and it would capsize. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had objected to it. But, according to historical reports, water did not fill into this boat. This may have happened either because al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had somehow repaired it himself soon after - as in a report carried by al-Baghawī according to which al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had replaced the plank with

glass. Or, water just did not enter the boat in the manner of a miracle. However, the context of the Qur'an by itself is telling us that the boat did not capsize - something which supports these reports.

We now move to the sentence: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيََا غُلَامًا (until when they met a boy -74). The word: غُلَامٌ (*ghulam*) in the text is used for a minor boy in the Arabic usage. This boy killed by al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was a minor - as corroborated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and most commentators. Further on, when the words: نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً (innocent person) were used for him, that too supports the view that he was a minor. The reason is that زَكِيَّةً (*zakiyyah*) means 'free of sin' and it can be either the attribute of a prophet or a minor child who faces no accounting for what is done by him and no sin is written in his Book of Deeds.

The habitation mentioned in: أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ (the people of a town - 77) which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and al-Khaḍir عليه السلام passed through and whose inhabitants refused to host them was Anṭākiyah, as in the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, and Aikah, as in the report of Ibn Sīrīn. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that it was some habitation of al-Andulus (Spain) (Maḥzarī). Allah knows best.

### Verses 79 - 82

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسْكِينٍ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا  
وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ  
أَبُوهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ﴿٨٠﴾ فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ  
يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ﴿٨١﴾ وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ  
فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ  
أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَارَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا  
عَنْ رَحْمَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ  
عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾ ط

As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people who worked at sea. So I wanted to make it defective as there

was a king across them who used to take every boat by force. [79] And as for the boy, his parents were believers. We apprehended that he would impose rebellion and infidelity upon them. [80] We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety and more akin to affection. [81] And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father was a pious man. So your Lord willed that they reach their maturity and dig out their treasure - a mercy from your Lord. And I did not do it on my own accord. This is the reality of things about which you could not remain patient." [82]

### Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: *أَمَّا السَّيِّئَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسْكِينٍ* (As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people - 79). About the poor people to whom this boat belonged, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥbār رحمه الله that they were ten brothers. Five of them were handicapped while the other five worked hard to eke out a living for all of them by plying a boat against whatever fare they could collect.

### The definition of a *Miskīn*

A *miskīn* has been defined as one who has nothing. But, from this verse, we learn the true definition of a *miskīn*: Anyone who does not have the amount of wealth and property that exceed his need, basic and necessary, to the limit of legal *niṣāb* (threshold of *zakāh*). One who has less than that is also included under the definition of *miskīn*. The reason is that people called '*al-masākīn*' (plural of *miskīn*: poor people) had at least one boat the price of which will not be less than the amount of *niṣāb* (threshold). But, as it was engaged in earning what those people needed, basically and necessarily, they were still called '*masākīn*' (poor people). (Maḥzarī)

Regarding the last sentence of verse 79: *مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا*, al-Baghawī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the direction in which this boat was sailing, there was a cruel king who used to take boats ferrying people through by force. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام found it expedient to pull out a plank from the boat so that the cruel king, seeing this damaged boat, would let it go and thus those poor people would remain safe from the likely mishap. Comments sage Rūmī:

گر خضر در بحر کشتی را شکست صد درستی در شکست خضر هست

Yes, al-Khidr did break the boat while sailing at sea  
But, a hundred saving graces in his breaking we see

The opening sentence of verse 80: وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ (As for the boy) means the boy who was killed by al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. The reality behind it, as stated by him, was that the boy was cut out for infidelity and rebellion against parents. But, his parents were pious people. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said that they apprehended that, once this boy grew up, he would harass his parents and cause them pain. And when he took to infidelity as a young man, he would not only become a live trial for the parents but would also endanger the very faith of his parents because of their love for him.

In verse 81, it was said: فَآرَدْنَا أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ لَهُمَا رَبَّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رَحْمًا "We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety [having good deeds and morals] and more akin to affection [fulfilling due rights of the parents]."

It will be noticed that the form used in this situation is plural: حَاشَيْنَا (we apprehended) and: آَرَدْنَا (we wished). One reason for it could be that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام attributed this apprehension and wish to himself and to Allah Ta'ālā both. And it is also possible that he may have attributed it to himself alone - if so, the expression: آَرَدْنَا (we wished) would mean: 'we prayed to Allah' because this matter of replacing a boy with a better one is an act which falls in the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام or some other human being cannot be associated with it.

If, at this point, someone were to say: If it was in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā that this boy will grow into an infidel and mislead his parents as well, then, this event - true to the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā - should have necessarily transpired as it did. Then this doubt would be incorrect for the reason that nothing can come into being contrary to Divine knowledge.

It can be answered by saying that it was there in Divine knowledge with the appendage and condition: If he reached maturity, he will not only become a disbeliever himself but would pose a danger for other Muslims also. Then, as he was killed before reaching the age of maturity, the ensuing event is not contrary to Divine Knowledge. (Mazharī)

Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have reported from Ibn ‘Aṭiyyah that Allah Ta‘ālā had blessed the parents of the slain boy with a girl in his place who became the mother of a prophet. And, as in a report from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, she gave birth to two prophets. Some other reports say that through the prophet she gave birth to, Allah Ta‘ālā gave guidance to a large community.

About the statement: *وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا* (and there was beneath it a treasure for them - 82), Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā’ رضي الله عنه has reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that it was a treasure chest of gold and silver. (Narrated by Tirmidhī and al-Ḥakīm, from Maḥzarī)

Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه said that it was a tablet of gold inscribed with the following good counsel. This report was also narrated by Sayyidnā ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه with its chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Qurṭubī)

1. بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (*Bismillahir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*: With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful).
2. Amazing is the person who believes in destiny, then how could he despair.
3. Amazing is the person who believes that Allah Ta‘ālā is the sponsor of all in their sustenance, still, why would he consume himself in striving for more than he needs and in achieving what is redundant.
4. Amazing is the person who believes in death yet, how could he remain all happy.
5. Amazing is the person who believes in the reckoning of the Hereafter yet, how could he afford to be heedless.
6. Amazing is the person who knows the world and its vicissitudes yet, how could he sit relaxed about it.
7. لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ (*lā ilaha illallāh Muḥammad rasūlullāh*: There is no god but Allah Muḥammad is a messenger of Allah).

**The benefit of the righteousness of parents reaches children, and their children.**

The statement: *وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا* (and their father was a pious man - 82)



carries a hint that arrangements were made to have the buried treasure secured for the orphan children through al-Khaḍir عليه السلام for the reason that the father of the orphan children was some pious man dear in the sight of Allah. Therefore, it was to grant his wish and to bring benefit to his children that Allah Ta'ālā made this arrangement. Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir says: 'It is because of the piety and righteousness of a servant of His that Allah Ta'ālā protects his children, and the children of his children, and his family, even the homes built around his own.' (Maḥzarī)

As in al-Qurṭubī, sage Shiblī used to say that he was a guarantee of peace for the city and the area adjoining it. When he died, it was soon after his burial that the disbelievers of Dailam crossed Euphrates and took over Baghdād. At that time, everyone was saying that they were struck by double distress - the death of Shiblī and the sack of Dailam, (Qurṭubī, p. 29, v. 11)

According to Tafsīr Maḥzarī, this verse also indicates that people too should show consideration and affection for the children of the learned and the pious - unless, of course, they were to succumb to disbelief and sin.

Later, the word: أَشَدُّ (ashudd) in: أَنْ يَبْلُغَ أَشَدُّ هُمْ (that they reach their maturity - 82) is a plural form of: شَدَّة (shiddah) meaning maturity, the age when one reaches full maturity and becomes able to decide what is good or bad for him. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this is the age of twenty-five years. Others put it at forty years because it appears in the Qur'ān: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ، وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً (until when he reaches his maturity and reaches [the age of] forty years - al-Aḥqaf, 46:15)

### Prophetic Eloquence and the Nuances of Etiquette: An Example

Before we turn to this example, let us first understand that nothing can happen in this world, good or bad, without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. All phenomena of good and evil is as created by Him and is subservient to His intention and will. Things understood or named as evil or bad do deserve to be called as evil or bad in terms of particular individuals and particular circumstances. But, given a total world-view, they all are necessary and nothing but good in terms of being a Divine creation as based on wisdom.

In short, whatever calamity or accident stands activated in this world simply cannot materialize without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. In that respect, every good and evil can also be attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. But, the fact is that, given the creation of Allah Ta'ālā, no evil is evil. Therefore, etiquette demands that evil should not be attributed towards Allah Ta'ālā. The words of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'an: *وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ* (It is He who gives me [things] to eat and drink, [26:79] and when I am sick, it is He who cures me - 26:80) are a good example. They teach us the same etiquette when the provision of food and drink has been attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes the provision of cure from sickness. This too has been attributed to Him. In between came the mention of sickness. He attributed it to himself in the words: *وَأِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ* (and when I am sick, it is He who cures me) - not in the manner: When He makes me fall sick, He cures me too.

Let us now consider the diction of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. When he formed the intention of breaking the boat - which was obviously a vicious act - he attributed this intention to himself and said: *أَرَدْتُ* (*ara[d]tu*: I wanted to make it defective - 79). After that, he mentioned the killing of the boy and wished some one would replace him who would be better than him. Here, there was evil in the act of killing while being blessed with better progeny in his place was something good. Therefore, because of this common factor, the form used was that of the first person, plural. It was said: *أَرَدْنَا* (*aradnā*: we wished - 81) so that whatever obvious evil there lies in it is beamed back to his own self and whatever good lies in it stands attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. As for the third event - setting the wall right to secure the property of the orphans - it was nothing but good. This was attributed entirely to Allah Ta'ālā by saying: *فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ* (*fa arāda rabbuk*: So your Lord willed - 82).

### Is al-Khaḍir عليه السلام alive, or is he dead?

The event related to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'an has nothing to do with the question of his life or death after it. Therefore, no clear statement in this regard is present in the Qur'an, and Sunnah. Some reports suggest his being alive till now while others tell us otherwise. Thus, scholarly opinion has always been at variance in this matter. Those who hold that he is alive argue on the basis of the narrative from

Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه carried by al-Ḥākim in his al-Mustadrak. It says, 'when the Holy Prophet ﷺ left this mortal world, there came a person in black and white beard. Tearing the crowd of people, he reached inside and started weeping. Then, turning to the noble Companions, he said the following words:

إِنَّ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَاءً مِّنْ كُلِّ مُصِيبَةٍ، وَعِوَضًا مِّنْ كُلِّ فَايَةٍ، وَخَلْفًا مِّنْ كُلِّ هَالِكٍ، فَاِلَى اللَّهِ فَاَنْبِئُوا، وَإِلَيْهِ فَاَرْغَبُوا وَنَظَرُهُ، إِلَيْكُمْ فِي الْبَلَاءِ فَاَنْظُرُوا فَإِنَّمَا الْمَصَابُ مَن لَّمْ يُجِبِرْ

Indeed, in Allah there is endurance against all distress, and recompense of everything taken away, and He is the real caretaker for He alone survives after everyone is dead. So, return to Allah, turn to Him passionately and long for Him alone - because, deprived is he who has been deprived of the reward of enduring distress.

After having said these words, when the visitor departed, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنهما said, 'he was al-Khaḍir عليه السلام.' This narrative has also been reported by Ibn al-Jazrī in his al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn where the compiler is particular about including nothing but what is authentic.

And in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, it appears that Dajjāl (Imposter) will reach a point close to Madinah when a man of Madīnah will come out to confront him. He will be the best of men during that time, or among the better ones. Abū Ishāq said, 'this person will be al-Khaḍir عليه السلام.' (Qurtubī)

And Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā has reported in Kitāb al-Hawātif with necessary chains of authority that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه met al-Khaḍir عليه السلام who told him about a Du'ā' which, if recited by anyone after every Ṣalāh, would bring for him great reward, forgiveness and mercy. That prayer is given below:

يَا مَنْ لَا يَشُغْلُهُ سَمْعٌ عَنْ سَمْعٍ، وَيَا مَنْ لَا تَغْلِطُهُ الْمَسَائِلُ، وَيَا مَنْ لَا يَبْرُمُ مِنَ الْحَاحِ الْمُلِحِّينَ، أَذِقْنِي بُرْدَ عَفْوِكَ وَحَلَاوَةَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ

O He whose hearing of one thing does not hamper His hearing of the other,

And O He who never errs in responding to (millions of) requests simultaneously,

And O He who never becomes weary of the complaints made repeatedly by those who make them in prayers, let me, in Your mer-

cy, have a cool taste of Your forgiveness and sweetness of Your pardon. (Qurṭubī)

Then, within the same book, exactly the same event, the same prayer and the same incidence of meeting with al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه as well. (Qurṭubī)

Similar to this, there are countless events relating to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام that have been attributed to the community's men of Allah (*awliyā*).

As for those who do not accept the likelihood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive, their major argument comes from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. He says, 'one night, the Holy Prophet ﷺ led the ‘Ishā’ prayer for us during the latter days of his blessed life. After having turned for *salām*, he rose and said these words:

أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَيْلَتَكُمْ هَذِهِ فَإِنَّ عَلَى رَأْسِ مِائَةِ سَنَةٍ مِنْهَا لَا يَبْقَى مِمَّنْ هُوَ عَلَى ظَهْرِ الْأَرْضِ أَحَدٌ

Do you see this night of yours? And after a hundred years from this night, not one of those present over the land will be alive!

After having narrated this report, Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said, 'people say different things about it. But, what the Holy Prophet ﷺ meant to say was that this age will be over after hundred years.'

This narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh, almost in the same words. But, after having quoted this report, Allāmah al-Qurṭubī said, 'it offers no conclusive argument for those who hold that the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive is false because, in this narrative, the words used for the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام are general with a strong emphasis on the generality. Yet, it contains no decisive authority (*naṣṣ*) to prove that this generality covers the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام necessarily. The reason is that Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام too is among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام who has not died, nor was he killed. Therefore, as obvious, the letters: الف لام (*alif-lām*) in the words: عَلَى الْأَرْضِ (*‘ala al-ard*: over the land) is the *alif-lām* of '*ahd*,' (which points out to something familiar to the addressees), and means the land of Arabia. It does not include the whole land mass of the world out of which the Arabs had never heard

even the names of the land of Gog and Magog (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj), the far East and the Islands of the West.' This was the view of 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī.

Similarly, some people have taken the issue of the Finality of Prophet-hood as contrary to the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive. The answer to this is also clear. It can be said that the way the 'life' of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is not contrary to the Finality of Prophet-hood, the 'life' of al-Khaḍir can also be quite similar.

Some people have raised a doubt about the 'life' of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. They say, if he were present during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it would have been mandatory for him to come to him and to serve the cause of Islam under him. Because, it was said in Ḥadīth: *لَوْ كَانَ مُوسَى حَيًّا لَمَّا وَسَّعَهُ إِلَّا أَتْبَاعِي* "Had Mūsā been alive [today], he would have had no choice but to follow me [for my coming has resulted in the abrogation of the Faith of Mūsā عليه السلام]." But, not far out is the possibility that the 'life' and prophet-hood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام may be different from that of the usual Shari'ah-bearing prophets. Since he is charged with the duty of carrying out certain affairs of creation (*takwīn*) entrusted with him by Allah Ta'ālā, He takes care of this appointed duty staying aloof from people at large. As for following the Shari'ah of the Last Prophet, it is not a far out proposition that he may have started acting in accordance with it after the advent of the prophet-hood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. (Allah knows best)

In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has reported events of several pious elders having met al-Khaḍir عليه السلام but, along with it, he has also said:

وَالْجُمْهُورُ عَلَى أَنَّهُ مَاتَ

As for the majority of religious scholars, they hold the position that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has died. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, vol.6)

In Tafsīr Maḥzarī, Qāḍī Thana'ullāh of Pānīpat has said, 'the resolution of all these difficulties lies in what Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sarhandi, known as the reviver of the second Islamic millennium, said on the basis of his *mukāshafah* (discovery through induced illumination). His words are: 'I personally asked al-Khaḍir عليه السلام about this matter in a state of *kashf*. He said', "I and Ilyās عليه السلام are both not alive. But, Allah Ta'ālā

has granted us the ability to appear in the guise of living men and help people in different ways." (Allah, the Pure, the Exalted, knows best)

### Conclusion

I have said earlier that none of our articles of faith or problems of religious practice is connected with the death or life of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. Therefore, no clarification or explanation was given in the Qur'an, and Sunnah about it. So, there is just no need to enter into unnecessary discussion or debate in it, nor have we been obligated to believe in any one of the sides of the issue. But, as this problem has found currency on a wider level, details have been provided.

### Verses 83 - 88

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ ۖ قُلْ سَأَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٨٣﴾ إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٤﴾ فَاتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٥﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ ۖ وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا ۖ قُلْنَا يَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ ۖ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ تُعَذِّبُ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْتَ تُتَّخَذُ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالَ أَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُ ۖ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نُكَرًا ﴿٨٧﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءٌ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۖ وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

And they ask you about Dhul-Qarnain. Say, "I shall now recite to you some narration about him." [83]

Surely, We gave him power on Earth and provided for him a way to everything. [84] So he followed a way, [85] until when he reached where the sun sets, he found it setting into a miry spring and found near it a people. We said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, either you punish or take to something good for them." [86] He said, "As for the one who transgresses, we shall punish him, thereafter he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him - an evil punishment. [87] As for the one who believes and acts righteously, he will have the best in reward, and we shall deliver to him of our command that which is easy."

## Commentary

Verse 84 opens with the statement: **يَسْأَلُونَكَ** (They ask you). Who is asking? Related narratives show that they were the Quraysh of Makkah, those who were coached to ask three questions from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The purpose was to test his prophet-hood and veracity. The questions were about Rūḥ (spirit), Aṣḥāb al-Kahf (People of Kahf) and Dhul-Qarnain. Two of these have already been answered. The story of the People of Kahf has appeared earlier in this Sūrah, 9-26. The question about 'Rūḥ' has appeared towards the later part of the previous Sūrah (Bani Isrā'īl 17:85). Who was Dhul-Qarnain and what happened to him? This is the third question. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

### **Dhul-Qarnain: His identity, period and country and the reason why he was so named**

Why was he named Dhul-Qarnain? (the one having two horns) Regarding its reason, there are numerous sayings, and strong differences. Some said that he had two curly locks of hair, therefore, he was called Dhul-Qarnain. Some others said that he ruled countries of the East and West, therefore, he was named Dhul-Qarnain. There was someone who also said that he had marks on his head that resembled those of horns. It appears in some narratives that he had wound marks on both sides of his head, therefore, he was identified as Dhul-Qarnain. Allah knows best. But, this much already stands determined that the Qur'ān has certainly not given him the name of Dhul-Qarnain. In fact, this name came from the Jews. He may have been known by this name with them. Whatever part of the event of Dhul-Qarnain has been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān is no more than what is described below:

"He was a righteous and just king who reached the East and the West and conquered countries in between and ruled there justly. All sorts of means had been provided to him by Allah Ta'ālā in order to help him achieve his objectives. On the route of his conquests, he traveled in three directions: to the far West, to the far East and then to the mountain range in the North. At the last mentioned place, he closed the pass in between two mountains by a wall cast in molten metal which made it possible for the people of the area to stay protected against the pillage of Gog and Magog."

As for the question posed by the Jews to test the veracity and prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the answer given had left them satisfied.

They did not ask any more questions, such as: Why was he given the name, Dhul-Qarnain? Which country did he come from? What period of time did he belong to? This tells us that the Jews themselves took such questions to be unnecessary and redundant. And it is obvious that the Qur'ān mentions only that part of history or stories which relates to what is beneficial in the present life or in the life to come, or on which depends the understanding of something necessary. Therefore, neither did the Qur'ān take these things up nor were there any details about it described in any authentic Ḥadīth. And it was for the same reason that the most righteous forbears of Islam, the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭabī'īn also paid no particular attention to it.

Now the thing that remains to be addressed is this matter of historical narratives or that of the present Torah and Injīl. Then it is also evident that perennial interpolations and alterations have not left even the present Torah and Injīl intact as revealed Scriptures. Their status can now be that of history at the most. As for ancient historical narratives, they are overwhelmingly filled with Isrā'īlī tales that come from no authentic source, nor have they been found trustworthy in the sight of the learned of any time. Whatever the commentators have said in this matter is a compendium of these very historical narratives. Therefore, there are countless differences in them. Europeans have given great importance to history in modern times. No doubt, they have carried out painstaking research in this field. Through archaeological excavations and collection of inscriptions and artifacts, they have tried to reach the reality behind past events and in this process, they have come up with achievements not matched in earlier times. But, archaeological finds, inscriptions etc., can certainly help support an event but it is not possible to read a whole event through these. For it, therefore, historical narratives alone have become the basis. As for the validity of old historical narratives in these matters, we have just now learnt that their status is no more than that of a story. In their books, scholars of Tafsīr, classical or modern, have reported these narratives in their historical status only - no Qur'ānic objective depends on the element of their authenticity. Here too, that which is necessary is being written with the same status in view. A comprehensive research relating to this event appears in 'Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān' by Maulānā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى. Readers with a taste



for history may see it there.

In some narratives, it appears that there have been four kings who ruled over the whole world - two believers, and two, disbelievers. The believing kings are Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام and Dhul-Qarnain while the disbelieving ones are Nimrod (Namrūd) and Nebuchadnezzar (Bukht Naṣṣar).

About Dhul-Qarnain, it is a strange coincidence that several men have been famous in the world while bearing the same name. And it is equally strange that the title Sikandar (Alexander) is also attached with the Dhul-Qarnain of every period of time.

Approximately three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام, there is a king known as Sikandar (Alexander). He is identified with the appellations of the Greek, the Macedonian, the Roman etc. He was the one who had Aristotle (Arasṭū) as his minister, who fought a war against Dārā (Darius) and who conquered his country after killing him. This was the very last person to have become known in the world by the name Sikandar (Alexander). Stories relating to him are comparatively more famous around the world, so some people have also equated him with the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān. This is totally wrong because this person was a fire-worshipping polytheist. As for the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned by the Qur'ān, he may not be a prophet for 'Ulamā' have differed about his being a prophet. But, everyone unanimously agrees that he was a righteous believer - then, there is the textual authority of the Qur'ān in its own right which bears testimony to it.

Quoting Ibn 'Asākir, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has given his complete family tree in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah which ascends to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. He has said, 'this is the Sikandar who is recognized as the Greek, the Egyptian and the Macedonian, who founded the city of Iskandariyah (Alexandria) after his name and the Roman calendar dates back to his time. This Sikandar Dhul-Qarnain appeared after a long passage of time from the first one. This time has been identified as being more than two thousand years. He was the one who killed Dārā (Darius), overpowered the Persian monarchy and conquered their country. But, this person was a polytheist. Declaring him to be the one mentioned in the Qur'ān is totally wrong. Ibn Kathīr's own words are being quoted below:

فاما ذوالقرنين الثاني فهوا سكندر بن فيلبس بن مصرىح بن برس بن مبطون بن رومى بن نعطى بن يونان بن يافت بن بونه بن شرخون بن رومه بن شريط بن توفيل بن رومى بن الا صفر بن يقزبن العيص بن اسحق بن ابراهيم الخليل عليه الصلوة والسلام۔ كذا نسبه الحافظ ابن عساكر فى تاريخه المقدونى، اليونانى المصرى باني الاسكندرية الذى يورخ بيامه الروم، وكان متأخراً عن الاول بدهر طويل، وكان هذا قبل المسيح بنحو من ثلثمائة سنة وكان ارسطا طاليس الفيلسوف وزيره وهو الذى قتل دارا و اذل ملوك الفرس و اوطأ ارضهم وانما نبهنا عليه، لان كثيرا من الناس يعتقد انهما واحد، وان المذكور فى القرآن هو الذى كان ارطا طاليس وزيره فيقع بسبب ذلك خطأ كبير و فساد عريض طويل، فان الاول كان عبداً مؤمناً صالحاً ومملوكاً عادلاً، وكان وزيره الخضر، وقد كان نبياً على ماقرنانه قبل هذا واما الثاني فكان مشركاً، كان وزيره فيلسوفاً وقد كان بين زمانيهما ازيد من الفى سنة، فاين هذا من هذا؟ لا يستويان ولا يشتبهان الاعلى غيبى لايعرف حقائق الامور (البداية

والنهاية ص ١٠٦ ج ٢)

First of all, this research of Imām ibn Kathīr, the great scholar of Ḥadīth and history, helps remove a misconception. It clarifies that this Iskandar, who lived three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ ﷺ, who fought Dārā (Darius) and the Persian kings, and who is the founder of Alexandria, is not the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur’ān. This misconception seems to have affected some leading commentators as well. Abū Ḥayyān in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and ‘Allāmah ‘Ālūsī in Rūḥ al-Ma‘ani have said that this very Dhul-Qarnain is the one mentioned in the Qur’ān.

The second point emerges from the sentence of Ibn Kathīr: **وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ نَبِيًّا** (he was a prophet). It shows that, in the sight of Ibn Kathīr, the weightier opinion was that he was a prophet. Although, according to the majority of scholars, the weightier opinion is what Ibn Kathīr has himself reported on the authority Abī al-Ṭufayl from Sayyidnā ‘Alī ﷺ that he was neither a prophet nor an angel, rather was a righteous believer. Therefore, some ‘Ulamā have explained it by saying that the pronoun in: **إِنَّهُ كَانَ** (he was) reverts to Al-Khaḍir ﷺ and not to Dhul-Qarnain - which is closer in sense.

This leaves us with a problem. The Qur’ān mentions Dhul-Qarnain. Who is he? Which period of time did he belong to? Regarding this, sayings of ‘Ulamā differ. According to Ibn Kathīr, his time was the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ, two thousand years before the time of Alexander, the Greek, the Macedonian. Al-Khaḍir ﷺ was his minister. Ibn Ka-

thīr has also reported from the early righteous elders in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah that Dhul-Qarnain went for Ḥajj traveling on foot. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام found out about his arrival, he went out of Makkah to greet him. It is said that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also prayed for him and passed out some good counsel to him. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 108, v. 3) Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports from Adhrāqī that he did *ṭawāf* with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and offered sacrifice.

And Abū al-Raiḥān al-Bairūnī has said in his book al-'Āthār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah that 'this Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is Abū Bakr ibn Samma ibn 'Umar ibn Ifrīqīs al-Ḥimyarī, the one who conquered the East and West of the Earth. Tubba' al-Ḥimyarī al-Yamānī has shown pride in his poetry that his grandfather, Dhul-Qarnain, was a believer. He says:

قد كان ذوالقرنين جدي مسلماً      ملكاً علافى الارض غير مبعداً  
بلغ المشارق والمغارب يتغى      اسباب ملك من كريم سيد

Dhul-Qarnain, my grandfather, was a believing Muslim  
A king who conquered the non-believing Earth

He reached the Easts and the Wests seeking  
Means of power from the noble Master.

Abū Ḥayyān has reported this narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ. Ibn Kathīr has also mentioned it in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah. Ibn Kathīr adds that 'this Dhul-Qarnain is the first Tubba' (the title of the kings of Yaman). He was among the Tababī'ah (plural of Tubba') of Yaman and this is the same person who had ruled in favor of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the case of Bi'r Sab' (seven wells)' - (al-Bidāyah, p. 105, v. 2). In all these narratives, irrespective of the difference regarding the elements of his identity, his time period has been identified as that of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

As for the detailed discussion relating to Dhul-Qarnain provided by Maulāna Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān in his book, Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān, it can be stated in a nutshell. It can be said that the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is the king of Persia who is called Khorus by the Jews, Cyrus by the Greeks, Gorush by the Persians and Kai-Khusro by the Arabs. His period is said to be the period of Dāniyāl (Daniel) from among the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl - much later than the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

This brings it closer to the time of Iskandar al-Maqduni (Alexander, the Macedonian), the killer of Dārā (Darius). But, the learned Maulāna - like Ibn Kathīr - has also strongly maintained that Alexander, the Macedonian who had Aristotle as his minister cannot be the Dhul-Qarnain. The former was a fire-worshipping polytheist while the later, a righteous believer.

According to his research about the detailed description of Banī Isrā'īl falling into wrongdoing and rebellion twice, and of the respective punishment given to them twice, as in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-'Isra'), the Qur'ān says on the occasion of the first transgression of Banī Isrā'īl: **بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولَىٰ بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَحَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ** (We sent upon you some of Our servants having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses - 17:5). Here, the men with 'strong aggressive power' are Nebuchadnezzar and his supporting troops who killed forty thousand - seventy thousand in some narratives - men from the Banī Isrā'īl in Baytul-Maqdis, while taking more than one hundred thousand of them driven like a flock of sheep to his city of Babel. After that, as regards the second statement of the Qur'ān: **ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ** (Then We gave you your turn to overpower them - 17:6), this event transpired at the hands of the same king, Kai-Khusraw (Khorus or Cyrus). He was a righteous believer. He confronted Nebuchadnezzar, secured the release of Banī Isrā'īl held as captives by him and rehabilitated them back into Palestine. He even went on to resettle and repopulate the city of Baytul-Maqdis that was sacked earlier to the limit that he managed to have all treasures and major effects of Baytul-Maqdis carried away by Nebuchadnezzar from there returned back into the possession of Banī Isrā'īl. Thus, this person proved to be the savior of Banī Isrā'īl (the Jews).

It is likely that of the questions the Jews of Madīnah had set for the Quraysh of Makkah which they would ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test his prophethood, was this question about Dhul-Qarnain and that it had an underlying reason. This question was special since the Jews took him to be their savior and respected him.

In short, Maulanā Ḥifzur-Raḥmān has collected a sufficiently large number of evidences from the prophecies of the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl with reference to the present Old Testament as well as from historical narratives to present his research on this subject. Anyone who finds it

imperative to proceed towards additional research may consult it. My purpose in reporting all these narratives was simply to bring into focus sayings of leading Muslim scholars, historians and commentators as they relate to the life and time of Dhul-Qarnain. To decide as to whose saying is weightier and worthier out of these is not part of my objective. The reason is that things not claimed by the Qur'ān nor explained by Ḥadīth are things we have not been obligated to fix and clarify on our own for that responsibility does not rest on our shoulders. Thus, whichever saying turns out to be regarded as more weighty, worthy and sound, the aim of the Qur'ān will stand achieved after all. Allah knows best. Let us now proceed to the explanation of the verses.

Let us look at the first verse cited above: قُلْ سَأَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا (I shall now recite to you a narration about him - 83). It prompts us to find out as to why the Holy Qur'ān has elected to bypass the possible shorter expression of 'ذِكْرُهُ' *dhikrahū* (his narrations) at this place and has opted for two words: مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ('*minhu dhikra*') (some narration about him)? A little reflection would reveal that these two words have been used as indicators. They tell us that the Qur'ān has not promised to narrate the entire story of Dhul-Qarnain in its historical setting. Instead, it has stated that it will mention it in part. This is evident from the use of the particle: مِنْ (*min*) and the nunnation (*tanwīn*) of '*dhikra*' - a distinct feature of Arabic grammar. As for the historical debate relating to the name, lineage and time period of Dhul-Qarnain reported earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has already said in advance that it has skipped it as something unnecessary.

The word: سَبَبٌ (*sabab*) used in: وَأَتَيْنَهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا (and provided for him a way to everything - 84) is employed in the Arabic lexicon to denote everything harnessed to achieve an objective. It includes material instruments and resources as well as knowledge, insight and experience etc. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ). As for the expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (to everything), it means all things needed by a ruler to run the state system. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā had provided for the righteous king Dhul-Qarnain practically everything needed at that time in order that he could maintain his just rule, establish universal peace and extend his area of influence to other countries.

Verse 85: فَاتَّبَعَ سَبَبًا (So he followed a way) means that - though, the material means related to everything, even those that would facilitate his

access to every region of the world - however, the first thing he did was to use his means to travel in the direction of the West.

The statement in verse 86: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ (until when he reached where the sun sets) means that he reached the far limit towards the West beyond which there was no populated area.

The word: حَمِيَّةٌ (*hami'ah*) in the succeeding phrase: فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِيَّةٍ (into a miry spring) literally means dark marsh or mud carrying the sense of water beneath which there is dark mud and which causes the water itself to appear black. As for the sense of his seeing the Sun setting into such a spring, it means that an onlooker perceived it as setting into the spring because there was no habitation or dry land in sight. This is like being in an open field while the Sun is setting where as far as one can see there appears to be no mountain, tree, or structure, naturally one who looks at the sight would feel that the Sun was sinking into the land mass.

Said in the sentence which follows immediately was: وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا (and found near it a people), that is, near this dark spring, Dhul-Qarnain found a people. The later part of the verse shows that these people were infidels. Therefore, as said in the next verses, Allah Ta'ālā gave Dhul-Qarnain the choice of punishing them right away for their infidelity. Or, if he so wished, he could choose to deal with them benevolently by first asking them to consider the message of faith and bring them round to embrace it through dissemination of information and good counsel. After that, he could reward those who believe and punish those who do not. In response, Dhul-Qarnain elected to go by the second option. He said that he would try to bring them to the straight path through good counsel and advice. Then, he would punish those who stood by their infidelity and reward those who believed and did what was good.

The statement: قُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ (We said, 'O Dhul-Qarnain...') shows that Allah Ta'ālā has Himself said this addressing Dhul-Qarnain. Now, if Dhul-Qarnain is taken to be a prophet, there is no problem here. It will mean that it was said to him through the medium of revelation. And if, his prophethood is not to be recognized, there is only one way to rationalize the statement: قُلْنَا (*qulnā*: We said) and the address: يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ (*ya/O Dhul-Qarnain*). This way could be to take this address to have been

made to Dhul-Qarnain through the medium of some prophet - as suggested by the reported presence of Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام with him. Then, it is also possible that this revelation is just not the kind of *wahy* that is peculiar to a prophet or messenger of Allah. May be, it is a *wahy* or revelation in the literal sense like the word: *وَأَوْحَيْنَا* (*awḥainā*: We revealed or put into the heart) used in the Qur'ān for the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام - though, there is no probability of her being a prophet or messenger of Allah. But, Abū Ḥayyān says in *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* that the command given here to Dhul-Qarnain is a command to punish and kill those people. No such command can be given without the authority of a revelation to a prophet. This action cannot be taken on the authority of *Kashf* (illumination) and *Ilhām* (inspiration), nor can it be activated through any other source without the authority of *wahy* (revelation) to a *nabiyy* (prophet). For this reason, no probability other than the one being mentioned here is sound: Either Dhul-Qarnain himself is taken to be a prophet, or that there may be a prophet present during his time and it is through him that Dhul-Qarnain is addressed. And Allah knows best.

### Verses 89 - 91

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٩﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطْلُعُ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لَّمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُم مِّن دُونِهَا سِتْرًا ﴿٩٠﴾ كَذَٰلِكَ وَقَدْ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿٩١﴾

Thereafter, he followed a way [89] until he reached where the Sun rises; he found it rising over a people for whom We did not make any cover against it. [90] Thus it was. We encompassed in knowledge whatever he had with him. [91]

### Commentary

The Holy Qur'ān does describe this state of the people Dhul-Qarnain found living towards the East meaning thereby that they were not accustomed to the use of ways and means like houses, tents and dresses to seek protection against the Sun. But, it does not mention anything about their faith and deeds, nor does it say what Dhul-Qarnain did to them. However, it is obvious that these people too were infidels and Dhul-Qarnain handled them the way he had handled the people he had found in

the West as mentioned earlier. But, describing it again at this place was not considered necessary since finding it out is also possible on the analogy of the previous event. (As in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from Ibn 'Aṭīyyah)

### Verses 92 - 98

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٢﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونَهُمَا قَوْمًا  
لَا يَكَادُونَ يُفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالُوا إِذَا الْفَرَقَيْنِ إِنْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ  
مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا  
وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ مِمَّا كُنْتُ فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ  
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ أَتُؤْنِي زُبْرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ  
الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ أَتُؤْنِي أُفْرِغَ عَلَيْهِ  
قِطْرًا ﴿٩٦﴾ فَمَا اسْطَاعُوا أَنْ يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا ﴿٩٧﴾  
قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّي ۖ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ ۖ وَكَانَ  
وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا ﴿٩٨﴾ ط

Thereafter he followed a way [92] until when he reached between the two mountains, he found on their hither side a people who did not seem to understand anything said. [93] They said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are mischief-makers on the earth. So shall we set for you a revenue, provided that you make a barrier between us and them?" [94] He said, "That which my Lord has placed under my control is better, so help me with strength and I shall make a rampart between you and them. [95] Bring me ingots of iron." (They proceeded accordingly) until when he leveled up (the gap) between the two mountain-sides, he said, "Blow." (They complied) until when he made it (like) fire, he said, "Bring me molten copper and I will pour it upon this." [96] So they (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) were not able to climb it, nor were they able to make a hole in it. [97] He said, "This is a mercy from my Lord. Then, when the promise of my Lord will come, He will make it leveled to the ground. And the promise of my Lord is always true."



### Explanation of Difficult Words

1. The word السَّدَّ used in the expression: بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ denotes what becomes a barrier against something. It may be a wall or mountain and it may be natural or artificial. At this place, the word: السَّدَّيْنِ (*as-saddain*) means two mountains that stood as a barrier against the intrusion of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, they still attacked through the pass in between the two mountains and which was closed by Dhul-Qarnain.

2. The word: زُبُر (zubar) in: زُبُرَ الْحَدِيدِ (*zubar al-ḥadīd* - 96) is the plural of: زَبْرَه (zubrah) which means sheets in the sense of pieces, fragments or ingots of iron which were to be used in the wall designed to block the pass, obviously a stronger device as compared to bricks and rocks.

3. The word: الصَّدَفَيْنِ (*aṣ-ṣadafain* - 96) signifies the two sides of the mountain facing each other.

4. According to most commentators, the last word: قِطْرًا (*qiṭr*) in verse 96 means molten copper. There are some others who have explained 'qiṭr' as molten iron or pewter. (al-Qurṭubī)

5. The expression: دَكَّاءَ (*dakkaa'a* - 98) used about the wall means what would crumble down to the level of the ground.

### Commentary

#### The Identity of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Location of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain

A lot of absurd and strange things disseminated through Isrā'īlī narratives and historical stories have found currency to the extent that some commentators have also reported them in terms of their historical status, though they themselves do not find them trustworthy. The truth of the matter is that the Qur'ān has mentioned it briefly and the Holy Prophet ﷺ has informed his community also about the details as and where necessary. What has to be believed in as part of one's faith is limited to what has been covered in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth. Beyond that, whatever historical and geographical information has been provided by commentators, Ḥadīth experts and historians could be correct, or might as well prove incorrect. As for the variant sayings of historians from among those mentioned above, they are based on traces, analogies and conjectures. Whether they are true or false, it simply does not affect

what the Qur'an says.

At this place, I would first quote Aḥādīth which, according to respected Ḥadīth experts, are sound or trustworthy. After that, historical narratives will be taken up to the measure of their need in the present context.

### Ḥadīth Reports about Ya'jūj Ma'jūj

At least this much stands doubtlessly proved from the statements of Qur'an, and Sunnah that Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are national entities from among human beings. They are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام very much like them because so says the categorical statement (*naṣṣ*) of the Qur'an: وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ which means that all human beings surviving on the Earth after the Flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام shall all be from among his progeny. Historical narratives converge on the fact that they are of the progeny of Yafith son of Nūḥ عليه السلام - which is supported by a weak Ḥadīth as well. Regarding the rest of their antecedents, the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'an رضي الله عنه is most detailed and sound in authority. It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and in all books of Aḥādīth recognized for their authenticity. Ḥadīth experts declare it to be sound and authentic. This Ḥadīth carries details concerning the appearance of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and then, the appearance of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. A translation of this entire Ḥadīth is being given below:

Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'an رضي الله عنه says that one morning the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned Dajjāl (anti-Christ) and while doing that he said a few things which showed the low and negative aspect of his profile (such as his being one-eyed). Then, he also said a few things about him to the effect that his emergence was a matter of ominous trial (such as Paradise and Hell being with him and other extra-ordinary aspects of his persona). His narration (gripped us with such fear) as if Dajjāl was lurking somewhere (in the nearby) grooves of the date palms.

When we presented ourselves before him in the evening, he read our confused inner condition and asked, 'What is the matter with you?' (What did you conclude from what I had said?). We submitted, 'You talked about Dajjāl in the morning. Of things you said about him some seemed to belittle the matter of his emergence while you also said other

things which seemed to highlight his matter to proportions of a great trial to the extent that we thought he was present close to us in the grooves of the date-palms!' Then he said, 'Not just the Dajjāl, there are other trials I fear may afflict you more (that is, the trial of Dajjāl is not as great as you have taken it to be). If he appears - and I am among you - I shall confront him personally without you. And if he appears - and I am not among you - everyone will try to confront him in terms of his courage. And Allah is, in my absence, the guardian and protector of all Muslims. (You will recognize him as) a young man - hard curly hair, one eye protruding upwards (blind in the other as in other narratives). And if I can liken him (in this ugly profile) with someone, it is 'Abd al-'Uzza ibn Qaṭān (an ugly person from the tribe of Banū Khuḏā'ah during the Jāhiliyyah). If a Muslim from among you runs into him, he should recite the initial verses of Sūrah al-Kahf against him (which will keep him protected from Dajjāl). Dajjāl will emerge from the empty space between Syria and 'Iraq creating havoc right and left. O servants of Allah, you then stay firm against him.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, and how long will he tarry on the Earth?' He said, 'Forty days. But, the first day will be equal to one year, and the second day to one month, and the rest of the days equal to the usual.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, so on that day which will be equal to one year, shall we be offering (the five-timed) Ṣalāh for one day only?' He said, 'No. You will, rather, go by estimating time and offering prayers for the whole year.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, how fast will he be moving about the Earth?' He said, 'Fast like the cloud being followed by wind. Then he will pass by a people and ask them to rally round his false beliefs. They will believe in him and respond to his call. Then he will commission the clouds. They will start raining. He will order the Earth. It will turn green and verdant (and herds of cattle will graze therein) and when they return in the evening, their humps shall be much higher than before and their udders shall be full of milk and their waists shall be plumb. Then, Dajjāl will pass by another people and invite them to his disbelief. But, they will turn down his invitation. Losing hope, when he goes away from them, these believers will be stricken with famine and nothing of what once belonged to them will remain in their hands. And when Dajjāl will walk by this wasteland, he will address it, saying: 'Bring your treasures out.' So, its treasures will start following him like the honeybees follow their queen. Then Dajjāl

will call a man whose youth shall be in full bloom, strike him with a sword and cut him into two pieces and the two pieces will be placed as far apart as the distance between an archer and his target. Then he will call him. He will come (alive) to Dajjāl beaming with joy over his feat. In the meantime, Allah Ta'ālā will send down Al-Masīḥ ibn Maryam (Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام). He will alight at the white tower in the eastern part of Dimashq (Damascus) clad in two colored sheets with both hands resting on the wings of angels. When he bows his blessed head, drops of water will drip down from there (as if one has just come out of the shower). And when he raises his head up, from it drop silvery globules like genuine pearls. Any disbeliever who breathes the air from his breath will die that very instant and his breath will reach as far as reaches his glance. Then he will look for him until he will overtake him at the gate of Ludd (still there in Baytul-Maqdis by the same name) and kill him. After that, 'Īsā ibn Maryam will come to people whom Allah protected from Dajjāl. He will then touch their faces (with compassion for them) and give them the good news of having high ranks in Paradise.

While he would still be in the same state, Allah will reveal to 'Īsā: 'Verily, I am going to send forth the kind of men from among servants belonging to Me against whom no two hands will dare fight. So, you assemble and take My servants to the sanctuary of Mount Ṭūr (which Sayyidnā 'Īsā will do) and would send out Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and they will be seen hurtling down from every side. The first wave of them will pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah. They would drink out everything in it and when others of them will pass by it, (and seeing it dry) they will say: 'Surely, in this, there must have been water earlier in time.'

The prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will take refuge on the Mount Ṭūr. Other believers will find sanctuaries in their own fortified places. Food supplies will be there, but it would run short where-upon the head of a bull will be considered better than a hundred *dīnār*. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (and pray for the removal of their distress which will be answered) and He will send an epidemic (worm in neck) and they will be annihilated en masse to the last person. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will come down from the Mount of Ṭūr and see not a hand-span worth of land remaining unfilled with corpses and (because of their de-

composition) the place will be reeking with a strong stench. (Seeing this state of affairs) the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (praying for the removal of this distress as well which Allah will answer). He will send birds with necks like the neck of a camel. They will haul these corpses and throw them at the place where Allah wills (according to some narratives, they will put them away into the sea).

After that, Allah Ta'ālā will send rains. No clay home in the villages and no Bedouin tent in the desert will remain without it. Lands will be washed clean and left like mirror. Then, Allah Ta'ālā will tell the Earth, 'Grow your fruits and unravel the abundance of your blessings.' (And so it shall be and such shall be the bliss of increase that) one pomegranate will suffice as food for a group of people. And its shell will be used to make canopies for protection against the Sun and milk will be so blessed as to suffice for a large number of people. Milk from one cow will be enough for everyone in a tribe and milk from one goat will be adequate for a whole clan. (After forty years of this period of extra-ordinary abundance, peace and protection, when the time due for Qiyāmah will draw near) Allah Ta'ālā will send a pleasant wind which will cause their arm-pits to be benumbed and the soul of every believer and every Muslim will be taken away. Left there will be the worst among human beings, the wicked and the disbelieving ones, who will indulge in shame and outrage on the Earth like donkeys. And it is against them that the Hour will stand activated.'

As for the story of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj, the narration of Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ؓ deals with it in greater detail. It says that once they pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah, Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will climb Jabal al-Khamar, a mountain from among the mountains of Baytul-Maqdis, and say, 'We have killed whoever there was on the Earth. Come, let us now kill whoever there is out in the skies.' So they will shoot their arrows towards the sky and Allah will make their arrows return back to them smeared with blood (so that those dim-witted people are pleased with the prospect that they have done away with whoever there was in the skies).

About the story of Dajjāl, the narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ؓ adds that Dajjāl will stay away from al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah. When it will not be possible for him to reach even the link roads

leading to it, he will come to a saline tract of land close to Madīnah. At that time, a man will come out to confront him and this man will be the best of men at that time (or, among the best of men). Addressing him, he will say, 'I am certain that you are the Dajjāl about whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had told us.' (Hearing this), Dajjāl will start saying, 'Tell me, O people, if I kill this man, then make him alive, will you still doubt the thing (about my being God)?' They said, 'No.' So he will kill him and then bring him back to life whereupon he will tell Dajjāl, 'By Allah, now I have become more certain that you are the Dajjāl.' Hence, Dajjāl would want to kill him (all over again), but he will remain unable to enforce it. (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, Allah Taʿālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam ؑ, 'raise the Hell-bound from your progeny.' He will wonder, 'my Lord, who are they?' Then, the Divine command will go forth that nine hundred and ninety nine of every one thousand are Hell-bound with only one bound to go to Paradise. Scared, the noble Ṣaḥābah asked, 'Yā Rasūlallah, 'who from among us shall be the one bound to go to Paradise?' Thereupon, he said, 'do not worry because out of these nine hundred and ninety nine Hell-bound people, there will be only one from among you while, ratio-wise, there will be a thousand from among the Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar ؓ in the Mustadrak of al-Hakim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Taʿālā divided all human beings into ten parts. Nine of these belong to Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj while the remaining one part covers the human beings of the whole world. (Ruh al-Maʿānī)

After having quoted these narrations in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah, Ibn Kathīr has written that it tells us that the number of Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj is significantly higher than the entire human population.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd with sound chains of authority, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that ʿĪsā ؑ will live on the Earth for forty years after his descension. As for the narration in Muslim which puts this duration of stay at seven years, it has been rated as less in strength or having some unapparent meaning (*marjūḥ* or *muʿawwal*) by Ḥafīz in

Faṭḥ al-Bārī who has declared the very period of forty years as correct. Then there are clarifications in Aḥādīth which report that this whole period will be marked with peace and blessings. Absolutely no malice and hostility will exist among people, none even between any two of them. (Muslim and Aḥmad)

Al-Bukhārī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the Hajj and ʿUmrah of Baytullah will continue even after the emergence of Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj. (Tafsīr Maḡharī)

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim report from Umm al-Muʿminīn, Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh that one day the Holy Prophet ﷺ woke up from sleep with his blessed face red while he was saying:

لا إله إلا الله ويل للعرب من شرقد اقترب فتح اليوم من ردم يأجوج ومأجوج مثل  
هذه وحلقت تسعين

'*Lā ilāha illallāh. Alas for Arabia! Evil is drawing near. Today, a part of the Wall of Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj has opened up like this*' and he made a ring by joining the tips of his thumb and index finger (to indicate the size of the hole in the Wall).

Umm al-Muʿminīn, Sayyidah Zainab رضى الله عنها says that following his statement, we submitted, 'Yā Rasūlallah, is our destruction possible even when we have righteous people among us?' He said, 'Yes, it is - (particularly) when evil (*khathath*) abounds' (similar reports appear in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, as in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah of Ibn Kathīr). That a hole was made into the Wall of Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj to the measure shown in the Ḥadīth could be taken in the real sense and also in a figurative one which would indicate the weakening of the Wall made by Dhul-Qarnain. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah report from a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj keep digging through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Doing it everyday they reach the farthest part of this iron Wall so close as would make the light on the other side become visible to them. But, at that point, they say that they would dig all the way through it the next day, and return. However, Allah Taʿālā makes it as strong as it was all over again. Then comes the next day and they start anew to dig through it. This cycle of their effort to dig and demolish and that of mending and fortify-

ing from Allah's side will continue until such time up to which Allah Ta'ālā intends to hold back Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. And when He intends to release them, they will dig, reach the farthest limit and say, 'If Allah wills, we shall go across it tomorrow.' (By making their effort dependent on the name and will of Allah, they will have the *taufīq* to succeed) So, when they return the next day as usual, they will find the remaining non-dug portion of the Wall as they had left it and this they will demolish and go across.

Tirmidhī has reported this narration on the authority of Abū 'Awānah, Qatādah, Abī Rafī', Abū Hurairah, in that order, and then he has said: 'غريب لا نعرفه إلا من هذا الوجه' (Unfamiliar. We do not know it except from this source). Ibn Kathīr has also reported this narration in his Tafsīr and then he has this to say:

اسناده جيد قوى ولكن متنه فى رفعه نكارة

Its chains of narrators are good and strong, but its text in the matter of its ascension (the effort to raise the channel of transmission up to attribute it the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not supported by stronger sources).

Ibn Kathīr comments on this Ḥadīth in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah: If it is held to be correct that this Ḥadīth is not *marfū'* (traceable in ascending order to the Holy Prophet ﷺ), instead, is a narration from Ka'b al-Aḥbār, then, it becomes clear that it is not worthy of trust. Now there is another possibility. The narration is regarded to be free from any error made by the narrator. It is given the status of the very saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then, it would mean that this action of digging the Wall by Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will start at the time when the hour of their emergence draws close. And as for the statement of the Qur'ān, that is, no hole can be made in this Wall, it refers to the time when Dhul-Qarnain had made it. This leaves no contradiction here. Moreover, it could also be said that breaking a hole into the Wall means a hole which goes all the way through it - and this narration states it clearly that this hole does not go all the way through it. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 12, v. 2)

In Fath al-Bārī, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has reported this Ḥadīth with reference to 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid and Ibn Ḥibbān as well and said that they all narrate from Qatādah and some of their narrators are the authorities of



the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. Then, he has not entertained any doubt about the Ḥadīth being rated as *marfūʿ* (ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). Then he says with reference to Ibn al-ʿArabi that this Ḥadīth contains three Divine signs, that is, miracles: (1) That Allah Taʿālā did not let their minds think of the alternative of continuing their digging operation round the clock including the day and night both. If so, it would have not been at all difficult for a people with so many of them to work in shifts of day and night with specified assignment of duties. (2) That their minds were turned away from taking the option of scaling over the Wall by using artifices and devices. Although, from a narration of Wahb ibn Munabbih, it becomes clear that these people tilled the land which also yielded fruits and they used instruments of many kinds in this process. It should have not been difficult for them under these circumstances to assemble together the means of scaling the Wall. (3) That for such a long time it never occurred to them that they should have said, InshaʿAllah: If Allah wills, and that this statement will issue forth through their speech only when the time of their emergence will come close.

Ibn al-ʿArabi has said that this Ḥadīth also tells us that there are people among the Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj who believe in the existence of Allah and in His Will. Then, it is also possible that Allah Taʿālā may cause this statement to issue forth through their speech without having any belief and they find their job all done with its *barakah* (*ashrāṭ as-sāʿah* by as-Sayyid Muḥammad, p. 154). But, what is obvious here is that they too have received the call of the blessed prophets. Otherwise, according to the textual authority of the Qurʾān (*naṣṣ*), they should not be subjected to the punishment of Jahannam: *وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّى نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا* (And it is not Our way to punish [anyone] unless We send a messenger - al-Isrāʾ, 17:15). This tells us that the invitation to believe has reached them too. But, they chose to stick by their denial. However, there will also be some people among them who would be subscribing to the view that Allah exists and that He has intention and will - though, having this much of a belief is not sufficient for *ʾImān* or faith, unless there is the essential faith in Prophet-hood and Hereafter. However, the saying of 'InshaʿAllah': If Allah wills, despite Kufr (disbelief), is not a far out possibility.

### Conclusions drawn from the narrations of Ḥadīth

That which stands proved about Yaʿjūj Maʿjūj from the statements of

the Holy Prophet ﷺ as in the Aḥādīth cited above is given below:

(1) Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام like the rest of human beings. The majority of Ḥadīth experts and historians identify them as the progeny of Yāfith, the son of Nūḥ عليه السلام. And it is also obvious that the progeny of Yāfith son of Nūḥ had spread itself out far and wide among different tribes, nationalities and many a populated areas between the period of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and that of Dhul-Qarnain. Thus, it is not necessary that the races known as Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were pinned down as a whole exclusively behind the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. There must have been some of their tribes and nationalities living on the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. However, it can be said that the savage killers and destroyers among them were restrained through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians refer to them generally as Turks, Mangkhol or Mongols. But, from among these, the name of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj applies only to the savage, uncivilized, blood-thirsty tyrants who remained untouched by civilization. The Turks, Mangkhols or Mongols who became civilized stand unsubstantiated by this name.

(2) The number of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj is several times higher than the number of the human beings of the whole world, at least at the ratio of one to ten. (Ḥadīth #2)

(3) The tribes and nationalities of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj stopped from crossing over to the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain so restrained right through the close of the zero Hour of the Last Day of Qiyāmah. The time destined for their emergence will be preceded by the appearance of Mahdī and Masīḥ عليهما السلام and that of Dajjāl (the anti-Christ). They will be released exactly after 'Īsā عليه السلام has descended and has killed Dajjāl. (Ḥadīth #1)

(4) At the time Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are to be released, the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will crumble down all leveled to the ground (verse 18:98). The merciless hordes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj would present an spectacle when, coming down from the mountain slopes all simultaneously, the speed of their descent would give the impression that they are sliding down to the ground en masse. These countless savage humans will hit the whole earth and its population. No one would be able to stand up against the killing and plunder by them. The apostle of Allah, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will, under Di-

vine command, take refuge on Mount Ṭūr along with his believing companions. People in other habitations of the world will seek asylum in available safe places. When supplies run out, necessities of life will become highly expensive. As for the rest of human population, these savages will finish them off and lick out their rivers. (Ḥadīth #1)

(5) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions that these countless locust like peoples will be destroyed simultaneously. The earth will be covered up with their dead bodies and the stench from which would make human rehabilitation on the earth difficult. (Ḥadīth #1)

(6) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions once again that their dead bodies would be disposed of into the sea or made to disappear altogether and the whole earth will be washed clean through a universal rain. (Ḥadīth #1)

(7) After that, there shall come a reign of peace lasting for nearly forty years. The earth will open the gates of its blessings. No one will remain poor and needy. No one will hurt or harass anyone. Peace and comfort shall prevail universally. (Ḥadīth #3)

(8) During this period of peace, the Hajj and 'Umrah of Baytullah will continue. (Ḥadīth #4) As for the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his burial in the Sacred Mausoleum, it already stands proved from the narrations of Ḥadīth. This too will transpire when he will travel to Ḥijāz for Hajj or 'Umrah. (As reported by Muslim from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه - explanatory note). After that, he will die in al-Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah and buried in the Sacred Mausoleum.

(9) During the later period of the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he was shown a dream activated through a revelation (*waḥy*) that a hole had opened up in the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, which he declared to be a sign of impending evil for Arabia. Some Ḥadīth experts (*al-muḥaddithīn*) have interpreted the opening of a hole in this Wall as real. Some others have taken it figuratively in the sense that this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain has become weak, the time of the emergence of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj has come close and its effects will show up in the form of Arab decline. Allah knows best.

(10) After his descent, he will stay on the earth for forty years. (Ḥaḍīth #3) Earlier than him, the period of Mahdī ﷺ will also be that of forty years, part of which will feature the confluence and cooperation of both. In his book, *Ashrāṭ al-Sā'ah* (p.145), Sayyid Sharīf Barzanjī has said that the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ will follow the killing of Dajjāl and the peace prevailing thereafter and extend to forty years. This will make his total stay in the world for a period of forty-five years. And, it has been mentioned on page 112 that Mahdī ﷺ will appear a thirty plus years before Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ and the total period credited to him will be that of forty years. Thus, the presence of the two blessed souls shall coincide for a number of five, or seven years, and both their periods will be marked by a reign of justice throughout the world. The earth will open up the gates of its blessings, neither will anyone remain poor, nor will anyone bear malice and hostility against anyone else. Of course, the great trial of the appearance of Dajjāl will hit the whole world during the later period of Mahdī ﷺ - with the exception of Makkah, Madīnah, Baytul-Maqdis and the Mount of Ṭūr. This trial will be the greatest as compared to the rest of the trials the world has faced. Dajjāl and his disorder will last for forty days only. But, out of these forty days, the first day will be that of one year, the second day that of one week and the rest of days will be like they usually are. One way this can happen is that these days are really made to be that long - because, during those later times, nearly all events will be extraordinary and miraculous in nature. Then, it is also possible that the days and nights keep alternating as they usually do. But, it stands proved from Ḥaḍīth that Dajjāl would be a great magician. When so, it is also possible that, under the spell of his magic, common people remain unable to notice this revolutionary change in the alternation of days and nights and continue seeing this phenomena as nothing but one usual day. As for the injunction in Ḥaḍīth of performing Ṣalāh during that day on the estimated analogy of usual days, it also seems to support the assumption that the days and nights would be changing really, but people would not realize it cognitively. Therefore, in this day of one year, the order given was to perform Ṣalāh for three hundred sixty days. Otherwise, had the day been really one day only, the rules of the Sharī'ah would have required only five Ṣalāhs as obligatory for one day as such. In short, the total period of Dajjāl will have forty such days.

After that, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will descend, kill the Dajjāl and put an end to the disorder created by him. However, quite close to that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will emerge unleashing another spate of disorder, pillage and killing. But, the period of their presence will not go beyond a few days when they too will be destroyed all simultaneously as a result of the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. In short, there will be two ominous trials of Dajjāl and Ya'jūj Ma'jūj during the later period of Sayyidnā Mahdī عليه السلام and the early period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام which will shake the people of the entire earth upside down. Before and after these counted few days, however, the whole world will experience justice, peace and blessings. During the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, there will remain on the earth no creed and religion other than Islam. The earth will start sending forth its hidden treasures. No one will remain poor and needy. Even beasts and poisonous life forms will not hurt anyone.

### **An essential point of guidance:**

As far as the information given above about the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, these have been communicated to the Muslim Ummah by the Qur'ān, and the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Believing in it as such is necessary and opposition, impermissible. Now there remains the area of geographical and racial investigation as to questions like - Where is the wall of Dhul-Qarnain located? Who are these people called Ya'jūj Ma'jūj? Where do they live now? Here, it can be said that no Islamic 'Aqīdah (article of faith) depends on knowing this, nor does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān hinge on it. But, the religious scholars of the Muslim Ummah, only in order to answer the absurdities dished out by antagonists and to provide additional insight, have discussed this subject in details. A part of it is being reported here.

### **Views of Muslim scholars**

In his Tafsīr, al-Qurṭubī has reported from as-Suddiyy that twenty-one of the twenty-two tribes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were shut off by the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. One of their tribes was left out on the inner side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. They are Turks. After that, al-Qurṭubī says that the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the Turks resemble the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and that the incidence of a war between them and Muslims during the later times appears in a ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. At present, he continues: A large number of Turk people are arrayed against

Muslims. Only Allah knows their exact number and only He can save Muslims from their evil. It appears as if they are the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - or, at least, are their forerunners. (Al-Qurtubī, p. 58, v.11) (Al-Qurtubī belongs to the sixth century of Hijrah when the Tātār onslaught came and destroyed the Islamic Caliphate. This great upheaval is well known in Islamic history and the Tātārs are reputed to be from the Mogol or Mongk-hol Turks). But, as for al-Qurtubī, he has simply said that they resembled the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and could be their forerunners. He has not identified the havoc caused by the Tātārs as the emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj which is one of the signs of the coming of the last day of Qiyāmah. The reason is that the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim mentioned above makes it clear that this emergence will come to pass after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام during his period.

Therefore, 'Allamah 'Ālūsī has, in his Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, strongly refuted the position of those who have taken the Tatars as the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. According to him, the very thought is a flagrant error and certainly an opposition to the textual authority of Ḥadīth. However, this much he too said that this havoc, no doubt, did resemble the havoc to be caused by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. (Rūḥ, p. 44, v. 16) It proves that the view of some contemporary historians who take modern Russia or China or both as the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj would have not been really wrong. However, the condition is that they should have meant by it the same thing said by al-Qurtubī and al-'Ālūsī, that is, the upheaval caused by them resembled that of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, declaring it to be the very emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - something reported in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth as signs of Qiyāmah and which was due to come after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام - is absolutely wrong. The approach is erroneous and it betrays a rejection of the textual authority (*nuṣṣ*) of Ḥadīth.

Famous historian, Ibn Khaldun has taken up this subject in the prolegomena of his history. As part of his description of the sixth kingdom, he has alluded to the geographical location of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain as follows:

"Inhabiting towards the west, in the ninth part of the seventh kingdom, there are tribes of Turks called قنچاق (*qinjāq*) [Qipcaq or Qypchaq as in Bertold Spuler] and چركس (Cherkess) [Circassians, the Caucasian people, as in Spuler]. The eastern side is

populated by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. In between the two, Mount Caucasus draws the line of demarcation. It has been mentioned earlier that it begins from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ* located in the east of the fourth kingdom and goes up to the northern end of the kingdom. Then, receding away from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, it continues in a north-western direction and enters the ninth part of the fifth kingdom. From here, it reverts to its first direction until it enters the ninth part of the seventh kingdom. Once it reaches there, it goes from the south in a north-western direction. Located in between this mountain range is the 'Wall of Alexander.' It is situated in the middle of the ninth part of the seventh kingdom as we have identified earlier and the Qur'ān too informs us about it.

In his book of geography, 'Abdullāh ibn Khurdāzbih has reported the dream of the 'Abbāsī Khalīfah, Wāthiq Billah in which he had seen that the Wall had opened up. As a result, he woke up all upset and sent his emissary, Sallam on a fact-finding mission. On his return, he reported the condition and distinct features of this very Wall." (Muqaddimah ibn Khaldun, p. 79)

That Wāthiq Billah, the Abbāsī Khalifah sent an observer group to investigate the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain and that it did return after having made the investigation has been mentioned by Ibn Kathīr too in *al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah*. Also said there is that this Wall has been made in iron with huge locked gates and is located towards the north-east. After narrating the event, Tafsīr Kabir and al-Ṭabarī add: One who comes back after having seen the Wall reaches the barren fields facing Samarkand in the company of guides. (Tafsīr Kabīr, v. 5, p. 513)

The great scholar of Islam and my revered teacher, Maulanā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī has mentioned Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain in his book, *عقيدة الإسلام في حياة عيسى عليه السلام*. Though it is an adjunct of his book yet, whatever he has mentioned there measures up to the highest level of investigation and Tradition. He said: To remain protected against the plunder and devastation by mischievous and savage human beings walls have been built on the earth, not simply at one place but at several places. Different kings have built these at various places during different ages. Most famous and the largest among these is the Great Wall of China. Its length given by Abū Ḥayyān al-Andulūsī (the royal historian of the Iranian Court) is twelve hundred miles. It was founded

by Faghfur, the Emperor of China, and that the date of its inception goes back to three thousand four hundred and sixty years after the advent of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, and also that the Moghul people (Mongol or Mongkhol) call this Great Wall, '*atkuwah*', and the Turks, '*burqūrqah*'. Then he has acknowledged that several walls of this nature are found at other places as well.

Our leading fellow-servant of the Faith, Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān Sihwārī, may he rest in peace, has given a well-documented historical detail elaborating the statement of Shaykh Kashmirī in his well-known book, *Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān*. A gist is given below:

The range of the evil savagery of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj was so extensive that, on the one hand, the people of southern Caucasia suffered from their tyrannical onslaughts while, on the other hand, the inhabitants of Tibet and China also served as sitting targets of their savagery. It was to stay safe from these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj that protective walls were built at various place during different ages. The largest among these is the Great Wall of China mentioned earlier.

The second Wall is located near Bukhārā and Tirmidh in Central Asia. It is situated at a place called Darband (meaning 'blocked passage'). This Wall was there during the time of the famous Moghul king, Taimūr Lang (Timur, the Lame; Tamerlane). The German confidant of the Roman King, Cella Berger, has mentioned him in his book. Kilafchu, the emissary of Castille, the King of Andulusia has also referred to him in his travelogue. When he presented himself as the emissary of his King before Taimūr, he had passed by this spot. He writes that the Wall of Bāb al-Ḥadīd (Iron Gate) is situated on the route coming from Mousel and which lies in between Samarkand and India. (From *Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* by al-Ṭanṭāwī, v. 9. p. 198)

The third Wall is located in Dāghistān in Russia. This too is famous by the name of Darband (blocked passage) and Bāb al-Abwāb (The Gate of gates). Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in Mu'jīm al-Buldān, al-Idrīsī in al-Jughrāfiyah and Bustānī in Dāiratul-Ma'ārif have described these in great details, a gist of which is as follows:

"In Dāghistān, 'Darband' is a Russian city. It is situated on the western shore of Baḥr Khaḍīr (Caspian Sea), latitude 43.3 North and longi-



tude 48.15 east. It is also called 'Darband Nausherwān'. Another name for it, 'Bāb al-Abwāb,' is also famous."

The fourth Wall is located in the higher parts of Caucasia towards the west of this very 'Bāb al-Abwāb' where, in between two mountains, there is a pass well known as the Dāryāl Pass. This fourth Wall is right here and is known as the Wall of Qafqāz or Mount Qoqā or Koh Qāf (Caucasus). About it, Bustānī writes:

"And close to it (the Wall of Bāb al-Abwāb), there is another Wall which goes on extending towards the West. In all likelihood, this may have been built by the people of Fāris (Persia) as a measure of defense against the northern Berbers. Since the identity of its founder was not authentically known, some people have attributed it to Alexander while some others have ascribed it to Cyrus and Nausherwan. And Yāqūt says that it has been constructed with molten copper." (Dā'iratul-Ma'ārif, v. 7, p. 651; Mu'jīmul-Buldān, v. 8, p. 9)

Since all these Walls are in the North and have been built for a single need, therefore, difficulties have come up in determining as to which of these is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. And the major confusion has showed up in the case of the last two Walls because the name of both the places is Darband and there is a Wall also present at both. Out of the four Walls mentioned above, the Great Wall of China is the longest and the oldest. About it, no one says that it is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Then, instead of being in the North, it is in the Far East - and that it is in the North is clear as indicated by the Qur'ān al-Karīm.

Now, the thing revolves between the remaining three Walls which happen to be but in the North. Out of these, speaking generally, historians - Mas'ūdī, Iṣṭakhrī, Ḥamawī and others - identify the Wall located in Dāghistān, or at Darband in the Caucasian territory of Bāb al-Abwāb by the Caspian Sea as the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians who have called the Wall and Darband of Bukhārā and Tirmidh as being the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain have, most likely, been confused because of the common factor of the word, Darband. At this point, its location stands nearly fixed. Now, it can be said that it is situated in Bāb al-Abwāb by the Darband of Caucasia in the territory of Dāghistān, or is located even at a higher altitude of the Mountain of Qafqāz or Qāf (Caucasus). As for a

Wall being there on both these places is a fact proved by historians.

By way of further refinement in between the two probabilities given above, my revered teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh has, in 'Aqīdatul-Islam,' given preference to the Wall of Koh Qāf (Qafqāz: Caucasus) as being the Wall built by Dhul-Qarnain. ('Aqīdatul-Islam, p. 297)

### **The Wall of Dhul-Qarnain: Is it still there? Will it be there until Qiyāmah? Or, has it disintegrated?**

Historians and geographers of Europe do not recognize the presence of any of these northern Walls in our time, nor do they admit that the passage of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj is still blocked. On that basis, some Muslim historians have also started saying and writing that the event of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth has already taken place. Some of them have declared the great onslaught of Tātārs in the sixth century Hijrah as being the emergence of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Still others have found it sufficient to equate the contemporary rise of the Russian, Chinese and European peoples with the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and have thereby closed the case conveniently. But, all this is - as stated earlier with reference to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī - totally wrong. To say that the particular emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān was a sign of Qiyāmah translates as a denial of Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth. The Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth of Muslim narrated by al-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān رضي الله عنه, and others says that Qiyāmah will come after three events have taken place. These events will be the emergence of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the killing of Dajjāl. How can it be said that it has already come to pass! The reason is obvious. The Dajjāl has not emerged. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has yet to descend. And there is no doubt about it.

Nevertheless, it is not counter to any textual authority (*naṣṣ*) of Qur'ān, and Sunnah that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain may have disintegrated now and some people from among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may have come on this side. However, this will remain subject to the condition that one admits that their last and the most massive onslaught, which will prove to be the destroyer of the entire human population, has not come yet. In fact, it will come after the great manifestation of the signs of Qiyāmah mentioned earlier, that is, the appearance of the Dajjāl and

the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام etc.

The considered view of 'Allāmah Kashmīrī رحمه الله تعالى in this matter is that the European assertion that they have scanned the whole world and have found no trace of this Wall bears no weight. First of all, the reason is that they themselves have clearly admitted that, despite having reached the zenith of travel and research, there remain many forests, rivers and islands about which they had been unable to collect information. Then, not too remote is the probability that the Wall, despite being present, may now have taken the form of a mountain because of mountains crumbling and joining together. But, no absolute textual authority (*naṣṣ*) contradicts the fact of this Wall disintegrating before Qiyāmah, or of some people from the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj crossing over to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route.

The strongest argument put forward in favor of this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain surviving until the last day of Qiyāmah is based on the statement of the Qur'ān: فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ (98). Here, Dhul-Qarnain says, 'when the promise of my Lord will materialize (that is, the time will come for the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj to appear), Allah Ta'ālā will make this Wall crumble down to ground level.' The proponents of this argument have interpreted the words: وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ (the promise of my Lord) in this verse in the sense of Qiyāmah, the Last Day - although, the words of the Qur'ān are not definite and categorical about it. The reason is that the Qur'ānic words: وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ (the promise of my Lord) carry a very clear sense of their own. So, what is meant here is that the arrangement made by Dhul-Qarnain to block the entry of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may not necessarily remain there, as is, forever. When Allah Ta'ālā wills to have the passage open to them, this Wall will lie demolished. Therefore, it is not necessary that it would happen precisely close to the Qiyāmah. Accordingly, all commentators have mentioned both probabilities in the sense of: وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ (the promise of my Lord). It appears in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ:

وَالْوَعْدُ يَحْتَمِلُ اِنْ يَرَادُ بِهِ يَوْمُ الْقِيَمَةِ، وَاِنْ يَرَادُ بِهِ وَقْتُ خُرُوجِ يَاجُوجَ وَ مَاجُوجَ

And the promise has the probability that meant by it is the Day of Qiyāmah and that meant by it is the time of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj.

One way of verifying this could be the eventuality that the Wall lies

demolished, the passage has opened up and the onslaught of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj has begun. It does not matter whether its beginning is taken to be from the havoc caused by the Tātār in the sixth century Hijrah, or from the present ascendancy of the peoples of Europe, Russia and China. But, it is evident that the aggressive emergence of these civilized peoples - something taking place in a constitutional and legal framework - cannot be classed as rank disorder which is being particularly pointed out by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. The anatomy of havoc given there is that it will unfold in the form of such a magnitude of merciless bloodshed and devastation that it will eliminate the entire human population. Rather, the outcome will, then, be that some nationalities of these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj had turned civilized after having moved to this side. They certainly turned out to be the source of great disorder and trial for Islamic countries. But, till now, their savage counterparts who know nothing but bloodshed have not come to this side as destined - and the majority of them are of that kind. These will emerge very close to Qiyāmah.

The source of the second argument is the Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad where it is said that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj keep digging this Wall everyday. But, first of all, Ibn Kathīr has declared this Ḥadīth to be *ma'ṭūl* (defective despite its apparently correct chain of narrators). Secondly, in the Ḥadīth itself, there is no clarification that the day Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will cross over the Wall by virtue of saying Insha'Allah the thing will happen necessarily close to the Qiyāmah. Then, the Ḥadīth does not provide any proof either that the whole lot of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will remain restrained behind the Wall. Even if some groups, or nationalities, from among them were to come to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route, it will still not be too far out an eventuality in the presence of powerful modern ships. In fact, some historians have mentioned that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj have found the way to reach this side via long sea travel. If so, the Ḥadīth does not contradict that either.

In short, there is no clear and definite proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah that goes on to establish that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain standing right through the last day of Qiyāmah. Or, their elementary and insignificant attacks against the human population on this side will not be possible. However, in all certainty, the time of that horrific and

devastating onslaught which will destroy the entire human population will be but close to the Qiyāmah as has been mentioned repeatedly. To sum up, it can be said that based on the textual authority (*nuṣūṣ*) of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, it is not possible to give an absolute verdict that the Wall against the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj has disintegrated leaving the passage open. Nor can it be said that, according to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, it is necessary that it survives up to the Qiyāmah. Both probabilities exist. And Pure and High is Allah who knows reality best.

### Verses 99 - 101

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ  
 جَمْعًا ﴿٩٩﴾ وَعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَرْضًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ الَّذِينَ  
 كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَنْ ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا  
 ع  
 ﴿١٠١﴾

And on that day, We will leave them (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) surging over one another. And the Horn shall be blown then We shall gather them together. [99] And on that day We will bring Jahannam fully exposed before the infidels [100] whose eyes were under a cover against My reminders, and they were not able to listen. [101]

### Commentary

As for the pronoun of the word: *بَعْضُهُمْ* (*ba'dahum*) in *يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ* (And on that day, We will leave them [Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj] surging over one another - 99), it is obvious that it reverts back to Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. Then, as for their condition described therein - 'surging over one another' - it is also obvious that this will be their state when the passage lies open for them and they will be hastening their way from the hilly heights down to the ground. Commentators have suggested other probabilities as well.

The pronoun in: *فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ* (*fajama'nāhum*: Then We shall gather them together - 99) is reverting back to the creation at large, human beings and the Jinn. The sense is that the entire creation of human beings and the Jinn who have been obligated with the percepts of the Sharī'ah (*mu-*

*kallaf*) shall be gathered together on the plains of Resurrection (al-Hashr).

### Verses 102 - 108

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِنْ دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنَّا  
أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ  
أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَّهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ  
أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ  
فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَزَنًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ ذَلِكَ  
جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنَّ  
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا  
﴿١٠٧﴾ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

Do, then, the disbelievers deem (it fit) that they take My servants as patrons beside Me? Surely, We have prepared Jahannam as entertainment for the disbelievers. [102]

Say, "Shall We tell you about the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds? [103] Those are the ones whose effort in the worldly life has gone in vain while they think they are doing well. [104] Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him, so their deeds have gone waste and We shall not assign to them any weight. [105] That is their punishment, the Jahannam, for they disbelieved and made My signs and My messengers a mockery. [106]

Surely those who believed and did righteous deeds theirs are the Gardens of Firdaus as entertainment [107] where they will live forever and will not wish to move from there." [108]

### Commentary

According to Tafsir al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ, in the first verse (102): أَفَحَسِبَ: الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِنْ دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ (Do, then, the disbelievers deem [it fit]

that they take My servants as patrons beside Me?), there is an elision (حذف: *ḥadhf*) in the text at this place, that is: فيجد بهم نفعاً ويتنفعون بذلك الاتحاد. As such, it would mean: 'Do these disbelieving people who have taken My servants - instead of Me - as the objects of their worship and the dispensers of their matters and problems think that this make-shift arrangement made by them would bring them some benefit and they would enjoy it?' This is a form of interrogative meant for negation or disapproval. In short, it means that such thinking is wrong, a mark of ignorance.

The word: عِبَادِي (*ibādī*: My servants) used here means angels, and the particular prophets whom the people of the world worshiped taking them as partners in the pristine divinity of Allah - as Sayyidnā 'Uzair and Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليهما السلام. Those who worshiped angels were some Arabs. As for those who ascribed partners to Allah, the Jews and Christians both did it. The Jews did it in respect of Sayyidnā 'Uzair عليه السلام and the Christians, in respect of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام. Therefore, meant here by: الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا (*al-ladhīna kafarū*: Those who disbelieved) in this verse are these very groups of disbelievers. Some commentators have taken عِبَادِي (*ibādī*: My servants) at this place to mean satans. In that case, الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا (those who disbelieved) would mean disbelievers who worship the Jinn and satans. Some other commentators have taken عِبَادِي (*ibādī*: My servants) at this place in the general sense of something created, under mastery, which becomes inclusive of all false objects of worship, idols, fire and stars. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī رحمه الله تعالى has referred to this aspect in the Summary of his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān while explaining servants as subjects. However, the first explanation given above has been rated as weightier in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and other Tafsīrs. Allah knows best.

The word: أَوْلِيَاءَ (*awliyā'*) is the plural of وَلِي (*waliyy*). This word is used in the Arabic language to carry several meanings. At this place, it means one who gets things done, resolves matters, fulfills needs - which is the particular attribute of the true object of worship. The purpose thereby is to take them as objects of worship.

Who are those referred to as: الْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا (The greatest losers in respect of [their] deeds - 103)? At this place, the first two verses (101, 102) are, in terms of their general sense, inclusive of every individual or

group that would put in a lot of effort in some deeds taking them to be good, but with Allah their effort is ruined and their deed, wasted. Al-Qurṭubī said that this situation is caused due to two things. One: Corruption in Belief. Two: Hypocrisy. It means that a person whose very Belief and Faith is not correct - no matter how good he is in his deeds and how painstaking in his effort - will find all this useless and wasted in the Hereafter.

Similarly, the deed of anyone who acts for the pleasure of the created by way of hypocrisy, that deed too will remain deprived of *thawāb* (reward). It is in terms of this general sense that some revered Ṣaḥābah have declared the Khārjites as the substantiation of this verse. Then, there are some commentators who take the Mu'tazilah, the Rawāfiḍ and some others as the groups who have strayed away from the straight path. But, in the next verse (105), it has been determined that meant at this place are those particular disbelievers who deny the verses of Allah Ta'ālā and the coming of Qiyāmah and Ākhirah. It was said: **أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا** (Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Maẓharī and others prefer the view that really meant at this place are particular disbelievers who deny Allah, the Last Day and the Reckoning of deeds. But, apparently too, even those people whose deeds were ruined by their corrupted beliefs and whose effort had gone waste cannot remain unaffected by its general sense. As for the related sayings reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sa'd رضي الله عنه, this is precisely what they mean. (Qurṭubī)

The last sentence in the same verse (105): **فَلَا تُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَزْنًا** (and We shall not assign to them any weight) means that their deeds may appear to be great outwardly, but when placed on the balance of reckoning, they will carry no weight. The reason is that these deeds will be of no use and will not carry any weight because of *kufṛ* (disbelief) and *shirk* (ascribing of partners to Allah).

According to a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, there will come a tall and heavy man who, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of a mosquito.' Then he said: 'If you wish to verify it, recite this verse of the Qur'an: **فَلَا تُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَزْنًا**



(and We shall not assign to them any weight).'

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه says: '(on the day of Qiyāmah) deeds as big as the mountains of Tihāmah will be brought in. But, they will carry no weight on the balance of justice.' (Qurṭubī)

The word: الْفِرْدَوْسُ (al-Firdaus) in: جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ (Gardens of Firdaus) means a verdant valley full of fruits and flowers - with reference to Paradise. However, difference exists as to the origin of this word. Is it Arabic, or is it non-Arabic? Those who call it non-Arabic have to refine it further. Is it Persian or Greco-Roman or Syriac? There are different views about this.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'when you ask of Allah, ask for Jannatul-Firdaus because it is the highest and the superior most rank of Jannah. Above it, there is the Throne of the Rahmān and from it issue forth all streams of Jannah.' (Qurṭubī)

The purpose of the last sentence: لَا يَغُورُونَ عَنْهَا حَوْلًا (and will not wish to move from there - 108) is to tell that this station of Jannah is a never-ending, ever-lasting blessing for them. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has promulgated His command to the effect that whoever has entered Jannah will never be expelled from there. But, there was the possibility of some doubt crossing someone's heart, for human beings naturally get fed up by living at one place. They wish to move out and go to other places. Now, if they were not allowed to go elsewhere out of Jannah, they might start feeling the pinch of a sort of restriction. This was answered in the verse by saying that taking Jannah on the analogy of other places is rank ignorance. Once a person goes into the Jannah, everything he saw and lived with in the mortal world would find all that trifling in the presence of the bliss and beauty of Jannah and - so blessed in that manner - no one would ever even think of going out of here.

### Verses 109 - 110

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفَدَ  
كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ

يُوحَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَمَمَ الْهَكْمِ إِلَهَ وَاحِدَةً فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ  
عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١١٠﴾

Say, "If the ocean were to be ink for the Words of my Lord, the ocean would have been consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, even though we were to bring another one, like it, in addition." [109]

Say, "Surely, I am but a human being like you; it is revealed to me that your God is the One God. So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord."

[110]

### Commentary

The cause of the revelation of the last verse of Sūrah al-Kahf: وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا (and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110), as mentioned in Ḥadīth reports, shows that *shirk* at this place means hidden *shirk*, that is, hypocrisy (رياء : *riyā'*).

One such narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ has been reported by Imām Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak as being sound on the criterion set forth by the two authorities, al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to the narration, one of the Muslims used to carry out Jihād in the way of Allah. Side by side, he wished that his soldiering and bravery in the cause be recognized and appreciated by the people. This verse was revealed about him (which tells us that one gets no *thawāb* (reward) by having such an intention in Jihād).

In Kitābul-Ikhlāṣ, Ibn Abī Ḥatīm and Ibn Abī al-Dunyā have reported from Ṭāwūs that a Ṣaḥābī stated before the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'There are occasions when I am ready to worship, or to do some righteous deed, my aim thereby is nothing but the pleasure of Allah. But, along with it, I do have the wish that people would see me doing it.' Hearing this, he observed silence until the cited verse was revealed.

And in Abū Nu'aym and in the history of Ibn 'Asākir, it appears on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that whenever the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Jundub ibn Zuhayr ؓ prayed, fasted or gave in charity and then saw people admiring him for doing those deeds, he felt pleased

about it and would then increase the frequency of those deeds. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

The gist of narrations given above is that the *shirk* prohibited in this verse is the hidden *shirk* of showing off (*riyā'*). And that a deed may though be for Allah alone but, along with it, should it become associated with some selfish motive of name, fame and recognition, then, this too will be a kind of hidden *shirk*, something that makes one's deed go waste, even harmful.

However, there are some other Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth which apparently seem to indicate otherwise. For example, Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that he submitted before the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'There are times when I am on my prayer mat inside my house (making Ṣalāh) and, all of a sudden, there comes someone. I like it that he saw me in that state. (Would that be *riyā'*?)' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'O Abū Hurairah, may Allah have mercy on you. Then you get two rewards, one for the deed you were already doing in secret, and the other for what you did openly after the coming of that person. (This is no *riyā'*).'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked, 'What do you say about a person who does some good deed, then hears people praising it?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, تِلْكَ عَاجِلُ بُشْرَى الْمُؤْمِنِ : "This is instant good news for the believer." (that his deed was accepted with Allah and He had his servants praise it).

The apparent difference in these two kinds of narrations has been resolved and brought in agreement in Tafsīr Maḥzarī. It says that the first kind of narrations about the cause of the revelation of the verse apply to a particular situation. This is when one associates his intention to please people or to earn a good name for himself along with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah through his deed to the extent that he further increases the frequency of that deed on being praised by people for it. This is, no doubt, hypocrisy (*riyā'*) and hidden *shirk*.

And the latter narrations, those from Tirmidhī and Muslim, concern another situation. This is when one has acted for the pleasure of Allah alone without any inclination of receiving publicity or praise for it and

then Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, gives him fame by making people praise him. If so, it has nothing to do with *riyā'* (showing off). In fact, this is spontaneous good news for the believer (that his deed has found acceptance with Allah).

### **Riyā' and its Evil Consequences: Stern Warnings of Ḥadīth**

Sayyidnā Maḥmūd ibn Labīd رحمہ اللہ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'What I fear most about you is minor *shirk*.' The Ṣaḥābah asked: 'Yā Rasūlallah, what is minor *shirk*?' He said, 'Riyā' (to do something only to show people). (Reported by Aḥmad in his Musnad)

After having reported this Ḥadīth in Shu'ab-al-ʾĪmān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported the remarks: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, when Allah Ta'ālā will reward His servants for their deeds, He will ask the practitioners of *riyā'* to go for their rewards to those they wanted to impress with their deeds and find out whether or not they have any for them.'

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رحمہ اللہ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'Allah Ta'ālā says 'I am free and above from associating with those associated with Me. Whoever does a good deed and then associates in it someone else with Me, then, I leave the entire deed for the one associated.' And, according to another narration, 'I withdraw from that deed making it exclusive for the person associated with me.' (Narrated by Muslim)

And Sayyidnā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar رحمہ اللہ reports that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, 'Whoever does a good deed to earn a fair name among people, then, Allah Ta'ālā too deals with him in a manner that he is disgraced before them.' (Narrated by Aḥmad in Shu'ab-al-ʾĪmān - from Tafsīr Maḥzarī)

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was asked about *ikhhlāṣ* (unalloyed sincerity) and *riyā'* (showing off). He said: *Ikhhlāṣ* requires that your good deeds remaining hidden should be what you like and the bad deeds remaining hidden should be what you do not like. After that, if Allah Ta'ālā discloses your deeds before the people, you should say, 'Yā Allah, all this is Your grace and favor, not the outcome of my deed and effort.'

And Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رحمہ اللہ that the Holy

Prophet ﷺ once mentioned *shirk* by saying: هُوَ فَيْكُمْ أَخْفَى مِنْ دَيْبِ النَّمْلِ (It is right there in you more stealthily than the soundless movement of an ant). Then, he added, 'I tell you something which, if you do, you will remain safe against all sorts of *shirk*, major or minor (*riyā'*). Make this prayer (*du'ā'*) three times every day:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَشْرِكَ بِكَ وَأَنَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لَا أَعْلَمُ

O' Allah, I seek refuge with You lest I associate a partner with You while I know and I seek forgiveness from You for what I do not know.

### Some Merits and Properties of Sūrah al-Kahf

Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever remembers to recite the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* (upheaval, trial) caused by Dajjāl (anti-Christ). (Reported by Muslim, Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī)

And Imām Aḥmad, Muslim and al-Nasā'ī have reported within this narration from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ؓ words to the effect that 'whoever remembers to recite the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* of Dajjāl.'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites the initial and the concluding verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will have light for him, from his feet up to his head. And whoever recites this Sūrah in full will have light for him, from the ground up to the sky." (Reported by Ibn al-Sunni, and Aḥmad in his Musnad)

And as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites Sūrah al-Kahf in full on the day of Jumu'ah will have light for him until the next Jumu'ah. (Reported and declared as Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Ḥakīm and al-Baihaqī in al-Da'awāt - from Maḥzarī)

To Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ someone said, 'I resolve in my heart to wake up in the later part of night and make Ṣalāh but sleep overtakes me.' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said to him, 'recite the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf - from: قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا (109) to the end of the Sūrah (110) - before you sleep. Then, the time you intend to wake up will be the time when Allah Ta'ālā will wake you up.' (Reported by ath-Tha'alibī)

And according to the Musnad of al-Dārimī, Zirr ibn Ḥubaish told 'Abdah, 'Anyone who sleeps after having recited these last verses will wake up at the time he or she intends to.' And 'Abdah says, 'we have tried this repeatedly. It happens just like that.'

### **An important word of advice**

Ibn al-'Arabī quotes his Shaikh, Ṭurtūshī: 'Let not the hours of your dear life pass away confronting contemporaries and socializing with friends. Watch out! Allah Ta'ālā has concluded His statement on the following verse:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110  
(Al-Qurtubī)

**Alhamdulillah**  
**The Commentary on**  
**Sūrah al-Kahf**  
**And Volume V**  
**End here.**